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HEREWARD THE WAKE

"LAST OF THE ENGLISH"

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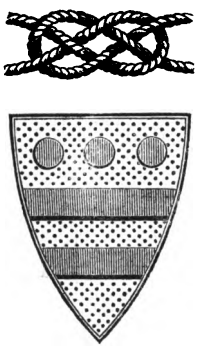

Vigila et Ora.

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HEREWARD THE WAKE

"LAST OF THE ENGLISH"

BY

CHARLES KINGSLEY

IN TWO VOLS.—VOL. I.

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1881

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To THOMAS WRIGHT, Esq., F.S.A., &c. &c.

My dear Wright,

Thus does Hereward, the hero of your youth, reappear at last in a guise fitted for a modern drawing-room. To you is due whatever new renown he may win for himself in that new field. You first disinterred him, long ago, when scarcely a hand or foot of him was left standing out from beneath the dust of ages. You taught me, since then, how to furbish his rusty harness, botch his bursten saddle, and send him forth once more, upon the ghost of his gallant mare. Truly he should feel obliged to you; and though we cannot believe that the last infirmity of noble minds endures beyond the grave, or that any touch of his old vanity still stains the spirit of the mighty Wake; yet we will please ourselves—why should we not?—with the fancy that he is as grateful to you as I am this day.

Yours faithfully,

C. KINGSLEY.

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HEREWARD THE WAKE,

"LAST OF THE ENGLISH."

PRELUDE.

OF THE FENS.

THE heroic deeds of Highlanders, both in these islands and elsewhere, have been told in verse and prose, and not more often, nor more loudly, than they deserve. But we must remember, now and then, that there have been heroes likewise in the lowland and in the fen. Why, however, poets have so seldom sung of them; why no historian, save Mr. Motley in his "Rise of the Dutch Republic," has condescended to tell the tale of their doughty deeds, is a question not difficult to answer.

In the first place, they have been fewer in number. The lowlands of the world, being the richest spots, have been generally the soonest conquered, the soonest civilised, and therefore the soonest taken out of the sphere of romance and wild adventure, into that of order and law, hard work and common sense, as well

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as—too often—into the sphere of slavery, cowardice, luxury, and ignoble greed. The lowland populations, for the same reasons, have been generally the first to deteriorate, though not on account of the vices of civilisation. The vices of incivilisation are far worse, and far more destructive of human life; and it is just because they are so, that rude tribes deteriorate physically less than polished nations. In the savage struggle for life, none but the strongest, healthiest, cunningest, have a chance of living, prospering, and propagating their race. In the civilised state, on the contrary, the weakliest, and the silliest, protected by law, religion, and humanity, have their chance likewise, and transmit to their offspring their own weakliness or silliness. In these islands, for instance, at the time of the Norman Conquest, the average of man was doubtless superior, both in body and mind, to the average of man now, simply because the weaklings could not have lived at all; and the rich and delicate beauty, in which the women of the Eastern Counties still surpass all other races in these isles, was doubtless far more common in proportion to the numbers of the population.

Another reason why lowland heroes "carent vate sacro," is that the lowlands and those who live in them are wanting in the poetic and romantic elements. There is in the lowland none of that background of the unknown fantastic, magical, terrible, perpetually feeding curiosity and wonder, which still remains in the Scottish highlands; and which, when it dis-

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appears from thence, will remain embalmed for ever in the pages of Walter Scott. Against that half-magical background his heroes stand out in vivid relief; and justly so. It was not put there by him for stage purposes; it was there as a fact; and the men of whom he wrote were conscious of it, were moulded by it, were not ashamed of its influence. For Nature among the mountains is too fierce, too strong for man. He cannot conquer her, and she awes him. He cannot dig down the cliffs, or chain the storm-blasts; and his fear of them takes bodily shape: he begins to people the weird places of the earth with weird beings, and sees nixies in the dark linns as he fishes by night, dwarfs in the caves where he digs, half-trembling, morsels of iron and copper for his weapons, witches and demons on the snow-blast which overwhelms his herd and his hut, and in the dark clouds which brood on the untrodden mountain peak. He lives in fear: and yet, if he be a valiant-hearted man, his fears do him little harm. They may break out, at times, in witch-manias, with all their horrible suspicions, and thus breed cruelty, which is the child of fear: but on the whole they rather produce in man thoughtfulness, reverence, a sense, confused yet precious, of the boundless importance of the unseen world. His superstitions develop his imagination; the moving accidents of a wild life call out in him sympathy and pathos; and the mountaineer becomes instinctively a poet.

The lowlander, on the other hand, has his own

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strength, his own "virtues," or manfulnesses, in the good old sense of the word: but they are not for the most part picturesque, or even poetical.

He finds out, soon enough for his weal and his bane, that he is stronger than Nature: and right tyrannously and irreverently he lords it over her, clearing, delving, dyking, building, without fear or shame. He knows of no natural force greater than himself, save an occasional thunder-storm; and against that, as he grows more cunning, he insures his crops. Why should he reverence Nature? Let him use her, and live by her. One cannot blame him. Man was sent into the world (so says the Scripture) to fill and subdue the earth. But he was sent into the world for other purposes also, which the lowlander is but too apt to forget. With the awe of Nature, the awe of the unseen dies out in him. Meeting with no visible superior, he is apt to become not merely unpoetical and irreverent, but somewhat of a sensualist and an atheist. The sense of the beautiful dies out in him more and more. He has little or nothing around him to refine or lift up his soul; and unless he meet with a religion, and with a civilisation, which can deliver him, he may sink into that dull brutality which is too common among the lowest classes of the English lowlands; and remain for generations gifted with the strength and industry of the ox, and with the courage of the lion, but, alas! with the intellect of the former, and the self-restraint of the latter.

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Nevertheless, there may be a period in the history of a lowland race when they, too, become historic for a while. There was such a period for the men of the Eastern and Central Counties; for they proved it by their deeds.

When the men of Wessex, the once conquering, and even to the last the most civilised, race of Britain, fell at Hastings once and for all, and struck no second blow, then the men of the Danelagh disdained to yield to the Norman invader. For seven long years they held their own, not knowing, like true Englishmen, when they were beaten; and fought on desperate, till there were none left to fight. Their bones lay white on every island in the fens; their corpses rotted on gallows beneath every Norman keep; their few survivors crawled into monasteries, with eyes picked out, hands and feet cut off; or took to the wild wood as strong outlaws, like their successors and representatives, Robin Hood, Scarlet, and Little John; Adam Bell, and Clym of the Cleugh, and William of Cloudeslee. But they never really bent their necks to the Norman yoke; they kept alive in their hearts that proud spirit of personal independence, which they brought with them from the moors of Denmark and the dales of Norway; and they kept alive, too, though in abeyance for awhile, those free institutions which were without a doubt the germs of our British liberty.

They were a changed folk since first they settled in that Danelagh:—since first in the days of King Beorhtric, "in the year 787, three ships of Northmen

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came from Hæretha land, and the King's reeve rode to the place, and would have driven them up to the King's town, for he knew not what men they were: but they slew him there and then;" and after that the Saxons and Angles began to find out to their bitter bale what men they were, those fierce Vikings out of the dark north-east.

But they had long ceased to burn farms, sack convents, torture monks for gold, and slay every human being they met, in mere Berserker lust of blood. No Barnakill could now earn his nick-name by entreating his comrades, as they tossed the children on their spear-points, to "Na kill the barns." Gradually they had settled down on the land, intermarried with the Angles and Saxons, and colonised all England north and east of Watling Street (a rough line from London to Chester), as far as the Tees.[1] Gradually they had

[1] For the distribution of Danish and Norwegian names in England and the prevalence, North of the Danelagh, from Tees to Forth, of names neither Scandinavian nor Celtic, but purely Anglo-Saxon, consult the Rev. Isaac Taylor's book, "Words and Places." Bear in mind, meanwhile, that these names represent for the most part, if not altogether, the Danish and Norse settlement at the end of the ninth century: but that this Scandinavian element was further strengthened by the free men who conquered England under Sweyn and Canute, at the beginning of the eleventh century. These men seem to have become not so much settlers of great lands as an intrusive military aristocracy, who gave few or no names to estates, but amalgamated themselves rapidly by marriage with the remnants of that English nobility which was destroyed at the battle of Assingdon. This fact explains the number of purely Anglo-Saxon names to be met with among Hereward's companions.

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deserted Thor and Odin for "the White Christ;" had their own priests and bishops, and built their own minsters. The convents which the fathers had destroyed, the sons, or at least the grandsons, rebuilt; and often, casting away sword and axe, they entered them as monks themselves; and Peterborough, Ely, and above all Crowland, destroyed by them in Alfred's time with a horrible destruction, had become their holy places, where they decked the altars with gold and jewels, with silks from the far East, and furs from the far North; and where, as in sacred fortresses, they, and the liberty of England with them, made their last unavailing stand.

For awhile they had been lords of all England. The Anglo-Saxon race was wearing out. The men of Wessex, priest-ridden, and enslaved by their own aristocracy, quailed before the free Norsemen, among whom was not a single serf. The God-descended line of Cerdic and Alfred was exhausted. Vain, incapable, profligate kings, the tools of such prelates as Odo and Dunstan, were no match for such wild heroes as Thorkill the Tall, or Olaf Trygvasson, or Swend Forkbeard. The Danes had gradually seized,

Some of them, like "Goderic of Corby," themselves with English names, held manors with Danish ones, even in that part of Lincolnshire where the Scandinavian element was strongest. In fact the aristocracies and the two races had been thoroughly amalgamated, not merely in the Danelagh, but over the greater part of England, and must be called, as in the case of King Harold Godwinsson, neither Saxons nor Anglo-Saxons, but rather Anglo-Danes.

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not only their own Danelagh and Northumbria, but great part of Wessex. Vast sums of Danegelt were yearly sent out of the country to buy off the fresh invasions which were perpetually threatened. Then Ethelred the Unready, or rather Evil-counsel, advised himself to fulfil his name, and the curse which Dunstan had pronounced against him at the baptismal font. By his counsel the men of Wessex rose against the unsuspecting Danes; and on St. Brice's eve, A.D. 1002, murdered them all, or nearly all, man, woman, and child. It may be that they only did to the children as the fathers had done to them: but the deed was "worse than a crime; it was a mistake." The Danes of the Danelagh and of Northumbria, their brothers of Denmark and Norway, the Orkneys and the east coast of Ireland, remained unharmed. A mighty host of Vikings poured from thence into England the very next year, under Swend Forkbeard and the great Canute; and after thirteen fearful campaigns came the great battle of Assingdon in Essex —where "Canute had the victory; and all the English nation fought against him; and all the nobility of the English race was there destroyed."

That same year saw the mysterious death of Edmund Ironside, the last man of Cerdic's race worthy of the name. For the next twenty-five years, Danish kings ruled from the Forth to the Land's End.

A noble figure he was, that great and wise Canute, the friend of the famous Godiva, and Leofric, Godiva's husband, and Godwin Ulfnothsson, and Siward Digre;

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trying to expiate by justice and mercy the dark deeds of his bloodstained youth; trying (and not in vain) to blend the two races over which he ruled; rebuilding the churches and monasteries which his father had destroyed; bringing back in state to Canterbury the body of Archbishop Elphege—not unjustly called by the Saxons martyr and saint—whom Tall Thorkill's men had murdered with beef bones and ox skulls, because he would not give up to them the money destined for God's poor; rebuking, as every child has heard, his housecarles' flattery by setting his chair on the brink of the rising tide; and then laying his golden crown, in token of humility, on the high altar of Winchester, never to wear it more. In Winchester lie his bones, unto this day, or what of them the civil wars have left; and by them lie the bones of his son Hardicanute, in whom, as in his half-brother Harold Harefoot, before him, the Danish power fell to swift decay, by insolence and drink and civil war; while with the Danish power England fell to pieces likewise.

Canute had divided England into four great Earldoms, each ruled, under him, by a jarl, or earl, a Danish, not a Saxon title.

At his death in 1036, the earldoms of Northumbria and East Anglia—the more strictly Danish parts—were held by a true Danish hero, Siward Biorn, alias Digre, "the Stout," conqueror of Macbeth, and son of the fairy bear; proving his descent, men said, by his pointed and hairy ears.

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Mercia, the great central plateau of England, was held by Earl Leofric, husband of the famous Lady Godiva.

Wessex, which Canute had at first kept in his own hands, had passed into those of the famous Earl Godwin, the then ablest man in England. Possessed of boundless tact and cunning, gifted with an eloquence, which seems from the accounts remaining of it to have been rather that of a Greek than an Englishman; and married to Canute's niece,[1] he was fitted, alike by fortunes and by talents, to be the king-maker which he became.

Such a system may have worked well as long as the brain of a hero was there to overlook it all. But when that brain was turned to dust, the history of England became, till the Norman Conquest, little more than the history of the rivalries of the two great houses of Godwin and Leofric.

Leofric had the first success in king-making. He, though bearing a Saxon name, seems to have been the champion of the Danish party, and of Canute's son or reputed son, Harold Harefoot; and he succeeded, by

[1] The Archæological Journal, in vol. xi. and vol. xii., contains two excellent Articles on the Life and Death of Earl Godwin, from the pen of that able antiquary E. A. Freeman, Esq. By him the facts of Godwin's life have been more carefully investigated, and his character more fully judged, than by any author of whom I am aware; and I am the more bound to draw attention to these articles, because, some years since, I had a little paper controversy with Mr. Freeman on this very subject. I have now the pleasure of saying that he has proved himself to have been in the right, while I was in the wrong.

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the help of the Thanes north of Thames, and the lithsmen of London, which city was more than half Danish in those days, in setting his puppet on the throne. But the blood of Canute had exhausted itself. Within seven years Harold Harefoot, and Hardicanute, who succeeded him, had died as foully as they lived; and Godwin's turn had come.

He, though married to a Danish princess, and acknowledging his Danish connection by the Norse names which were borne by his three most famous sons, Harold, Sweyn, and Tostig, constituted himself (with a sound patriotic instinct) the champion of the men of Wessex, and the house of Cerdic. He had probably caused, or at least allowed, to be murdered, Alfred, the Etheling, King Ethelred's son and heir-apparent, when he was supporting the claims of Hardicanute against Harefoot; he now tried to atone for that crime (if indeed he actually committed it), by placing Alfred's younger brother on the throne, to become at once his king, his son-in-law, and his puppet.

It had been well, perhaps, for England, had Godwin's power over Edward been even more complete than it actually was. The "Confessor" was, if we are to believe the monks, unmixed virtue and piety, meekness and magnanimity; a model ruler of men. No wonder, therefore, that (according to William of Malmesbury) the happiness of his times (famed as he was both for miracles and the spirit of prophecy) was revealed in a dream to Brithwin, bishop of Wilton,

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who made it public; for, meditating in King Canute's time on the near extinction of the royal race of the English, he was rapt up on high, and saw St. Peter consecrating Edward King. "His chaste life also was pointed out, and the exact period of his reign (twenty-four-years) determined; and when he inquired about his posterity, it was answered, 'The kingdom of the English belongs to God. After Edward, He will provide a king according to His pleasure.'" But the conduct which earned him the title of Confessor was the direct cause of the Norman Conquest and the ruin of his people; while those who will look at facts will see in the holy king's character little but what is pitiable; and in his reign little but what is tragical.——

Civil wars, invasions, outlawry of Godwin and his sons by the Danish and French parties; then of Alfgar, Leofric's son, by the Saxon party; the outlaws on either side attacking and plundering the English shores by the help of Norsemen, Welshmen, Irish and Danes—any mercenaries who could be got together; and then—"In the same year Bishop Aldred consecrated the minster at Gloucester to the glory of God and of St. Peter, and then went to Jerusalem with such splendour as no man had displayed before him;" and so forth. The sum and substance of what was done in those "happy times" may be well described in the words of the Anglo-Saxon chronicler for the year 1058. "This year Alfgar the earl was banished: but he came in again with violence, through aid of Griffin (the king of North Wales, his brother-in-law).

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And this year came a fleet from Norway. It is tedious to tell how these matters went."——These were the normal phenomena of a reign which seemed, to the eyes of chroniclers, a holy and a happy one; because the king refused, whether from spite or superstition, to leave an heir to the house of Cerdic, and spent his time between prayer, hunting, the seeing of fancied visions, the uttering of fancied prophecies, and the performance of fancied miracles.

But there were excuses for him. An Englishman only in name, a Norman, not only by his mother's descent (she was aunt of William the Conqueror), but by his early education on the Continent, he loved the Norman better than the Englishman; Norman knights and clerks filled his court, and often the high dignities of his provinces, and returned as often as they were expelled; the Norman-French language became fashionable; Norman customs and manners the signs of civilisation; and thus all was preparing steadily for the great catastrophe, by which, within a year of Edward's death, the Norman became master of the land.

We have gained, doubtless, by that calamity. By it England and Scotland, and in due time Ireland, became integral parts of the comity of Christendom, and partakers of that classic civilisation and learning, the fount whereof, for good or for evil, was Rome and the Pope of Rome: but the method was at least wicked; the actors in it tyrannous, brutal, treacherous, hypocritical: and to say that so it must have been;

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that by no other method could the result (or some far better result) have been obtained,—is it not to say that men's crimes are not merely overruled by, but necessary to the gracious designs of Providence; and that—to speak plainly—the Deity has made this world so ill, that He is forced at times to do ill that good may come?

Against the new tyranny the free men of the Danelagh and of Northumbria rose. If Edward the descendant of Cerdic had been little to them, William the descendant of Rollo was still less. That French-speaking knights should expel them from their homes, French-chanting monks from their convents, because Edward had promised the crown of England to William, his foreign cousin; or because Harold Godwinsson of Wessex had sworn on the relics of all the saints to be William's man; was contrary to their common-sense of right and reason.

So they rose, and fought; too late, it may be, and without unity or purpose; and they were worsted by an enemy who had both unity and purpose; whom superstition, greed, and feudal discipline kept together, at least in England, in one compact body of unscrupulous and terrible confederates.

And theirs was a land worth fighting for—a good land and large: from Humbermouth inland to the Trent and merry Sherwood, across to Chester and the Dee, round by Leicester and the five burghs of the Danes; eastward again to Huntingdon and Cambridge (then a poor village on the site of an old Roman

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town); and then northward again into the wide fens, the land of the Girvii, where the great central plateau of England slides into the sea, to form, from the rain and river washings of eight shires, lowlands of a fertility inexhaustible, because ever-growing to this day.

Into those fens, as into a natural fortress, the Anglo-Danish noblemen crowded down instinctively from the inland, to make their last stand against the French. Children of the old Vikings, or "Creekers;" they took, in their great need, to the sea-ward and the estuaries, as other conquered races take to the mountains, and died like their forefathers, within scent of the salt sea from whence they came.

They have a beauty of their own, these great fens, even now when they are dyked and drained, tilled and fenced—a beauty as of the sea, of boundless expanse and freedom. Much more had they that beauty eight hundred years ago, when they were still, for the most part, as God had made them, or rather was making them even then. The low rolling uplands were clothed in primæval forest; oak and ash, beech and elm, with here and there, perhaps, a group of ancient pines, ragged and decayed, and fast dying out in England even then; though lingering still in the forests of the Scotch highlands.

Between the forests were open wolds, dotted with white sheep and golden gorse; rolling plains of rich though ragged turf, whether cleared by the hand of man or by the wild fires which often swept over the

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hills. And between the wood and the wold stood many a Danish "town," with its clusters of low straggling buildings round the holder's house, of stone or mud below, and of wood above; its high dykes round tiny fields; its flocks of sheep ranging on the wold; its herds of swine in the forest; and below, a more precious possession still—its herds of mares and colts, which fed with the cattle and the geese in the rich grass-fen.

For always, from the foot of the wolds, the green flat stretched away, illimitable, to an horizon where, from the roundness of the earth, the distant trees and islands were hulled down like ships at sea. The firm horse-fen lay, bright green, along the foot of the wold; beyond it, the browner peat, or deep fen; and among that, dark velvet alder beds, long lines of reed-rond, emerald in spring, and golden under the autumn sun; shining "eas," or river-reaches; broad meres dotted with a million fowl, while the cattle waded along their edges after the rich sedge-grass, or wallowed in the mire through the hot summer's day. Here and there, too, upon the far horizon, rose a tall line of ashen trees, marking some island of firm rich soil. In some of them, as at Ramsey and Crowland, the huge ashes had disappeared before the axes of the monks; and a minster tower rose over the fen, amid orchards, gardens, cornfields, pastures, with here and there a tree left standing for shade. "Painted with flowers in the spring," with "pleasant shores embosomed in still lakes," as the monk-chronicler of

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Ramsey has it, those islands seemed to such as the monk terrestrial paradises.

Overhead the arch of heaven spread more ample than elsewhere, as over the open sea; and that vastness gave, and still gives, such cloudlands, such sunrises, such sunsets, as can be seen nowhere else within these isles. They might well have been star worshippers, those Girvii, had their sky been as clear as that of the East: but they were like to have worshipped the clouds rather than the stars, according to the too universal law, that mankind worship the powers which do them harm, rather than the powers which do them good. Their priestly teachers, too, had darkened still further their notion of the world around, as accursed by sin, and swarming with evil spirits. The gods and fairies of their old mythology had been transformed by the Church into fiends, alluring or loathsome, but all alike destructive to man, against whom the soldier of God, the celibate monk, fought day and night with relics, Agnus Dei, and sign of Holy Cross.

And therefore the Danelagh men, who feared not mortal sword or axe, feared witches, ghosts, Pucks, Wills o' the Wisp, Werewolves, spirits of the wells and of the trees, and all dark, capricious, and harmful beings whom their fancy conjured up out of the wild, wet, and unwholesome marshes, or the dark wolf-haunted woods. For that fair land, like all things on earth, had its darker aspect. The foul exhalations of autumn called up fever and ague, crippling and enervating, and tempting, almost compelling, to that wild

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and desperate drinking which was the Scandinavian's special sin. Dark and sad were those short autumn days, when all the distances were shut off, and the air choked with foul brown fog and drenching rains from off the eastern sea; and pleasant the bursting forth of the keen north-east wind, with all its whirling snow-storms. For though it sent men hurrying out into the storm, to drive the cattle in from the fen, and lift the sheep out of the snow-wreaths, and now and then never to return, lost in mist and mire, in ice and snow;—yet all knew that after the snow would come the keen frost and bright sun and cloudless blue sky, and the fenman's yearly holiday, when, work being impossible, all gave themselves up to play, and swarmed upon the ice on skates and sledges, to run races, township against township, or visit old friends full forty miles away; and met everywhere faces as bright and ruddy as their own, cheered by the keen wine of that dry and bracing frost.

Such was the Fenland; hard, yet cheerful; rearing a race of hard and cheerful men; showing their power in old times in valiant fighting, and for many a century since in that valiant industry which has drained and embanked the land of the Girvii, till it has become a very Garden of The Lord. And the Highlander who may look from the promontory of Peterborough, the "golden borough" of old time; or from that Witham on the Hill, which once was a farm of Hereward the Wake's; or from the tower of Crowland, while he and Torfrida sleep in the ruined nave

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beneath; or from the heights of that Isle of Ely which was so long the camp of refuge for English freedom; over the labyrinth of dykes and lodes, the squares of rich corn and verdure,—will confess that the Lowlands, as well as the Highlands, can at times breed gallant men.

Most gallant of them all, and their leader in the fatal struggle against William, was Hereward the Wake, Lord of Bourne, and ancestor of that family of Wake, the arms of whom appear in front of this book. These, of course, are much later than the time of Hereward. Not so, probably, the badge of the "Wake Knot," in which (according to tradition) two monks' girdles are worked into the form of the letter W. It and the motto "Vigila et ora," may well have been used by Hereward himself. I owe them (as I do numberless details and corrections) to the exceeding courtesy of that excellent antiquary, the Rev. E. Trollope, of Leasingham, in those parts.

Hereward's pedigree is a matter of no importance, save to a few antiquaries, and possibly to his descendants, the ancient and honourable house of the Wakes. But as I have in this story, followed facts as strictly as I could, altering none which I found, and inventing little more than was needed to give the story coherence, or to illustrate the manners of the time, I owe it to myself to give my reason for believing Hereward to have been the son of Earl Leofric and Godiva, a belief in which I am supported, as far as

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I know, only by Sir Henry Ellis (Introduction to Domesday) and by Mr. Thomas Wright. The reasons against my belief (well known to antiquaries) are these —Richard of Ely calls him simply the son of Leofric, Lord of Brunne, and of Ædiva; and his MS. is by far the most important document relating to Hereward. But he says that the older MSS. which he consulted were so ruined by damp, and torn, that "vix es eis principium a genitoribus ejus inceptum, et pauca interim expressimus, et nomen;" in fact that he had much difficulty in making out Hereward's pedigree. He says, moreover, as to Leofric the Mass Priest's Anglo-Saxon MSS., "In quibus (Anglicæ literæ) vero non licet non satis periti aut potius exarare deleta incognitarum literarum,"—which passage (whatever may have been the word now wanting to complete it) certainly confesses that he was but a poor adept at deciphering Anglo-Saxon MSS. He need hardly have confessed as much; for the misspellings of English names in his work are more gross than even those in Domesday; and it is not improbable that among the rest he may have rendered Godiva, or its English equivalent, by Ædiva.

That he should have been ignorant that Leofric was not merely Lord of Bourne, but Earl of Mercia, will not seem surprising to those who know how utterly the English nobility were trampled into the mud. To the Normans they were barbarians without a name or a race. They were dead and gone, too; and who cared for the pedigree of a dead man whose

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lands had passed to another? Thus of Marlesweyn nothing is known. Of Edric the Wild, a great chieftain in his day, all but nothing. Gospatric's pedigree has been saved, in part, by his relationship to Royalty, both Scotch and English; and Siward Digre's, like that of Gyda, his kinswoman, by their relationship with the kings of Denmark, and the Fairy Bear. But Gyda's husband, the great Earl Godwin, had become within three generations a "herdsman's son," and even Mr. Freeman's research and judgment cannot decide his true pedigree. As for Leofric, we know that he was son (according to Florence of Worcester) of Leofwin the Alderman, and had two brothers, one Norman, killed by Canute with Edric Streon 1017 (according to Ingulf); the other Edric Edwin, killed by the Welsh 1039. But we know no more.

That Ingulf should make him die A.D. 1057, is not strange, in spite of his many mistakes; for the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle gives the same date. But the monk, who probably a century or more after Ingulf, interpolated from Richard of Ely the passage beginning, "At this time a nobleman, the Lord of Bourne, etc." sub anno 1062, may well have been ignorant that Leofric Lord of Bourne, was also Earl of Mercia. But what need to argue over any statement of the so-called Ingulf, or rather "Ingulfic Cycle"? I shall only add that the passage sub anno 1066, beginning "Herward, who has been previously mentioned," seems to be by again a different hand.

Meanwhile the "Excerptum de Familia Here-

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wardi," calls him plainly the son of Leofric, Earl of Mercia, and the Lady Godiva; giving to her the same genealogy as is given by Richard of Ely to Ædiva.

This account of Hereward's family is taken from a document of no greater antiquity than the fifteenth century, a genealogical roll of the Lords of Bourne and Deeping, who traced their descent and title to the lands from Hereward's daughter: but it was no doubt taken either from previously existing records, or from the old tradition of the family; and, with no authority for contradicting it, and considering its general agreement with the other evidence, it is plain that Leofric of Bourne was generally understood to be the great Earl of Mercia of that name.

But the strongest evidence of the identity between Leofric of Bourne, and Leofric, Earl of Mercia, is to be found in Domesday-book.

The Lord of Bourne at the time of the Conquest, as is proved by the 'Clamores de Kesteven," was Morcar, Leofric of Mercia's grandson. This one fact is all but conclusive, unless we suppose that Leofric of Bourne had been dispossessed of his "dominium" by Morcar, or by Earl Algar his father, or, again, by Earl Leofric his grandfather. But such an hypothesis accords ill with the amity between Morcar and Hereward; and it is all but impossible that, if Hereward's family was then dispossessed, the fact should not appear in any of his biographies.

But Domesday-book gives no hint of any large landholders in or near Bourne, save Morcar, Lord thereof,

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whose name still lingers in the "Morkery Woods," a few miles off; Edwin his brother; and Algar, his father, a son of Earl Leofric and Godiva. The famous Godiva, also, was probably a Lincolnshire woman, though the manors which she held in her widowhood were principally in Shropshire. The domains of her ancestor, "The magnificent Earl Oslac," who lived in the days of King Edgar, were Deira, *i.e.* Danish Northumbria, from Humber to Tees; and he may have sprung from (as his name hints) the ancient kings of Deira. But charters (as far as we can trust them) connect him both with Peterborough and Crowland; and his descendant was Thorold of Bukenhale near Crowland, sheriff of Lincoln, from whom the ancient Thorolds of those parts claim descent; and this Thorold appears, in a charter of 1061, attested by Leofric and Godiva, as giving the cell of Spalding to Crowland. The same charter describes the manor of Spalding as belonging to Earl Leofric. His son, Algar, whose name remains in Algarkirk,[1] appears

[1] The *first* Earl "Algar," who signs a charter in the days of Beorrhed, king of the Mercians, and who does doughty deeds about A.D. 870, is, to me, as mythical as the *first* "Morcard, Lord of Brune," who accompanies him; the *first* Thorold of Bukenhale, who gave that place to Crowland about A.D. 806, and the first Leofric, or "Levric," Earl of Leicester (*i.e.* Mercia), who helps to found in Crowland, A.D. 716, a "monastery of *black Monks*." The monks of Crowland were, perhaps, trying to work on Hugh Evermue, Hereward's son-in-law, or Richard of Rulos, his grandson-in-law, as they were trying to work on the Norman kings, when they invented these charters of the eighth and ninth centuries, with names of Saxon kings, and

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as a benefactor to Crowland. And, in fine, the great folk of Bourne, as well as Spalding, were without doubt the family of Leofric, Earl of Mercia and Chester, and of the Lady Godiva; the parents, as I conceive, of Hereward. He would thus, on the death of Morkar, son of his elder brother Algar, take possession by natural right of the Lordship of Bourne, and keep up a special enmity against Ivo Taillebois, who had taken Spalding from his patrimony.

Lastly, it is difficult to me to suppose that Hereward would have been allowed to take the undisputed command of a rebellion so aristocratic as that of the Fens, over the heads of three earls, Morcar among them, had he not possessed some such natural right of birth as an earl's son, and, probably, like most great English Earls' families, of ancient royal, and therefore God-descended, blood.

On the supposition, too, that he was the last remaining heir of the Earls of Mercia, may be explained

nobles of Leofric and Godiva's house; or, again, the land being notoriously given to Crowland by men of certain names, who were then of no authority as rebels and dispossessed, it was necessary to invent men of like names, who were safely entrenched behind Saxon antiquity with the ancestors of Edward the Confessor. But in their clumsiness they seem to have mingled with them in the said charters and their mythic battles against the Danes, purely Danish names, such as Siward, Asketyl, Azer, Harding, Grimketyl, Wulfketyl, etc., which surely prove the fraud. Meanwhile, the very names of Levric, Algar, Morcar, Thorold, genuine or not, seem to prove that the houses of Leofric and Godiva were ancient rulers in these parts, whose phantoms had to be evoked when needed.

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William's strong desire to spare his life and receive his homage; as an atonement for his conduct to Edwin and Morcar, and a last effort to attach to himself the ancient English nobility. But of this enough, and more than enough; and so to my story.

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CHAPTER I.

HOW HEREWARD WAS OUTLAWED, AND WENT NORTH TO SEEK HIS FORTUNES.

In Kesteven of Lincolnshire, between the forest and the fen, lies the good market-town of Bourne, the birthplace, according to all tradition, of two great Englishmen; of Cecil Lord Burleigh, justly remembered throughout all time, and of Hereward the Wake, not unjustly, perhaps, long forgotten. Two long streets meet opposite the house where Burleigh was born, one from Spalding and the eastern fens, the other from the forest, and the line of the old Roman road on the north. From thence the Watergang Street leads, by the side of clear running streams, to the old Priory church, and the great labyrinth of grass-grown banks, which was once the castle of the Wakes. Originally, it may be, those earthworks were a Roman camp, guarding the King Street, or Roman road, which splits off from the Ermine Street near Castor, and runs due north through Bourne to Sleaford. They may have guarded, too, the Car-dyke, or great Catchwater drain, which runs from Peterborough northward into the heart of Lincolnshire, a still-endur-

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ing monument of Roman genius. Their site, not on one of the hills behind, but on the dead flat meadow, was determined doubtless by the noble fountain, bourn, or brunne, which rises among the earthworks, and gives its name to the whole town. In the flat meadow bubbles up still the great pool of limestone water, crystal clear, suddenly and at once; and runs away, winter and summer, a stream large enough to turn many a mill, and spread perpetual verdure through the fat champaign lands.

The fountain was, doubtless, in the middle age, miraculous and haunted: perhaps in heathen times, divine and consecrate. Even till a late date, the millers of Bourne paid water-dues to those of a village some miles away: on the strength of the undoubted fact, that a duck put into Bourne Pool would pass underground into the millhead of the said village. Doubtless it was a holy well, such as were common in the eastern counties, as they are still in Ireland; a well where rags, flowers, and other gew-gaws might have been seen hanging, offerings to the spirit of the well, whether one of those "nickers," "develen," or "luther-gostes," which St. Botulf met when he founded Boston near by, or one of those "fair ladies," "elves," or water-nymphs, who, exorcised from the North, still linger in the fountains of modern Greece. Exorcised, certainly, the fairy of Bourne was at an early date; for before the Conquest the Peterborough monks had founded a cell outside the castle ditch, and, calling in the aid of the Chief of the Apostles against those

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spirits of darkness who peopled, innumerable, earth, air, water, and fen, had rechristened it as "Peterspool," which name it bears unto this day.

Military skill has, evidently, utilised the waters of the Peterspool from the earliest times. They filled, at some remote period, the dykes at a great earthwork to the north, which has been overlooked by Antiquaries, because it did not (seemingly) form part of the enceinte of the mediæval castle of the Wakes. It still fills the dykes of that castle, whereof nothing remains now save banks of turf, and one great artificial barrow, on which stood the keep, even in Leland's time, it would seem, somewhat dilapidate. "There appear," he says, "grete ditches, and the dungeon hill of an ancient castle agayn the west end of the Priory. . . . It longgid to the Lord Wake; and much service of the Wake fee is done to this Castelle, and every feodary knoweth his station and place of service."

Of the stonework nothing now remains. The square dungeon, "a fayre and prettie building, with iv. square towers . . . hall, chambers, all manner of houses and offices for the lord and his train,"[1] and so forth, is utterly gone. The gate-house, thirty feet high, with its circular Saxon (probably Norman) arch, has been pulled down by the Lords of Burleigh, to build a farm-house; the fair park is divided into fair meadows; and a large part of the town of Bourne is, probably, built of the materials of the Wakes' castle,

[1] Peak's account of the towns in Kesteven.

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and the Priory, which arose under its protection. Those Priory lands passed into the hands of Trollopes and Pochins, as did the lands of the castle into those of the Cecils; and of that fee of the Wakes, all, as far as I know, is lost, *fors l'honneur*, which shone out of late in that hero of "Arrah," who proved, by his valour, pertinacity, and shiftfulness, not unworthy of his great ancestor Hereward. Verily the good old blood of England is not yet worn out.

A pleasant place, and a rich, is Bourne now; and a pleasant place and rich must it have been in the old Anglo-Danish times, when the hall of Leofric, the great Earl of Mercia, stood where the Wakes' feudal castle stood in after years. To the south and west stretched, as now, the illimitable flat of fen, with the spires of Crowland gleaming bright between high trees upon the southern horizon: and to the north, from the very edge of the town fields rose the great Bruneswald, the forest of oak, and ash, and elm, which still covers many miles of Lincolnshire, as Bourne Wood, Grimsthorpe Park, and parks and woodlands without number. To the south-west it joined the great forest of Rockingham, in Northamptonshire. To the west, it all but marched with Charnwood Forest in Leicestershire, and to the north-west, with the great Sherwood, which covered Nottinghamshire, and reached over the borders of Yorkshire. Mighty fowling and fishing was there in the fen below, and mighty hunting on the weald above, where still haunt, in Grimsthorpe Park, the primeval red-deer, descendants of

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those who fell by Hereward's bow, ere yet the first Lovell had built his castle on the steep, or the Cistercian monks of Fountains had found out the deep-embowered Vale of God, and settled themselves in the glen beneath the castle walls.

It is of those earlier days that this story tells; of the latter half of the eleventh century, and the eve of the Norman Conquest, when Leofric the Earl had the dominion in forest and manorial rights, in wood, and town, and fen; and beside him, upon the rich strip of champaign, other free Danish holders, whose names may be still found in Domesday Book, held small estates; and owed, probably, some military service to the great Earl at the hall within the Roman earthwork.

The house of Bourne, as far as it can be reconstructed by imagination, was altogether unlike one of the tall and gloomy Norman castles which, in the course of the next few generations, must have taken its place. It was much more like a house in a Chinese painting: an irregular group of low buildings, almost all of one story, stone below and timber above, with high-peaked roofs — at least in the more Danish country—affording a separate room, or rather house, for each different need of the family. Such a one may be seen in the illuminations of the century. In the centre of the building is the hall, with a door or doors opening out into the court; and sitting thereat at the top of a flight of steps, the lord and lady, dealing clothes to the naked and bread to the hungry.

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Behind the hall is a round tower, seemingly the strong place of the whole house. It must have stood at Bourne upon the dungeon hill. On one side of the hall is a chapel; by it a large room or bower for the ladies; on the other side a kitchen: and stuck on to bower, kitchen, and every other principal building, lean-to after lean-to, the uses of which it is impossible now to discover. The house had grown with the wants of the family—as many good old English houses have done to this day. Round it would be scattered barns and stables, in which grooms and herdsmen slept side by side with their own horses and cattle; beyond, the yard, garth, or garden-fence, high earth-banks with palisades on top, while the waters of the Peterspool wandered around outside all. Such was most probably the "villa," "ton," or "town," of Earl Leofric, the Lord of Bourne; such too, probably, the hall at Laughton-en-le-Morthem in Yorkshire, which belonged to his grandson Edwin, and therefore, probably, to him. Leofric's other residence, the Castle of Warwick, was already, it may be, a building of a more solid and Norman type, such as had been built already, here and there, for Edward the Confessor's French courtiers, by the hands of "Welisce men," *i.e.* French-speaking foreigners.[1]

Known, I presume, to all is Lady Godiva, mistress

[1] One such had certainly been built in Herefordshire. Lappenberg attributes it, with great probability, to Raoul, or Ralph the Staller, nephew of Edward the Confessor, and a near relation of Leofric.

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of Bourne, the most beautiful as well as the most saintly woman of her day; who, all her life, kept at her own expense thirteen poor folk wherever she went; who, throughout Lent, watched in the church at triple matins, namely, one for the Trinity, one for the Cross, and one for St. Mary; who every day read the Psalter through, and so persevered in good and holy works to her life's end, the devoted friend of St. Mary, ever a virgin; who enriched monasteries without number—Leominster, Wenlock, Chester, St. Mary's Stow by Lincoln, Worcester, Evesham; and who, above all, founded the great monastery in that town of Coventry, which has made her name immortal for another and a far nobler deed; and enriched it so much, that no monastery in England possest such abundance of gold, silver, jewels, and precious stones, besides that most precious jewel of all, the arm of St. Augustine, which not Lady Godiva, but her friend Archbishop Ethelnoth, presented to Coventry; having bought it at Pavia for a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.[1]

Less known, save to students, is her husband Leofric, whose bones lie by those of Godiva in that same minster of Coventry; how "his counsel was as if one had opened the Divine oracles;" very "wise," says the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, "for God and for the world, which was a blessing to all this nation;" the greatest man, as I have said, in Edward the Confessor's court, save his still greater rival, Earl Godwin.

[1] William of Malmesbury.

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Less known, again, are the children of that illustrious pair; Algar, or Alfgar, Earl of Mercia after his father, who died after a short and stormy life, leaving two sons, Edwin and Morcar, the fair and hapless young earls, always spoken of together, as if they had been twins; a daughter, Aldytha, or Elfgiva, married first (according to some) to Griffin, King of North Wales, and certainly afterwards to Harold, King of England; and another, Lucia (as the Normans at least called her), whose fate was, if possible, more sad than that of her brothers.

Their second son was Hereward, whose history this tale sets forth; their third and youngest, a boy whose name is unknown.

They had, probably, another daughter beside; married it may be, to some son of Leofric's staunch friend old Siward Digre; and the mother, may be, of the two young Siwards, the "white" and the "red," who figure in chronicle and legend as the nephews of Hereward. But this last pedigree is little more than a conjecture.

Be these things as they may, Godiva was the greatest lady in England, save two: Edith, Harold's sister, the nominal wife of Edward the Confessor; and Githa, or Gyda, as her own Danes called her, Harold's mother, niece of Canute the Great. Great was Godiva; and might have been proud enough, had she been inclined to that pleasant sin. But always (for there is a skeleton, they say, in every house) she carried that about her which might well keep her

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humble; namely, shame at the misconduct of Hereward, her son.

Now on a day—about the year 1054—while Earl Siward was helping to bring Birnam wood to Dunsinane, to avenge his murdered brother-in-law, Lady Godiva sat, not at her hall-door, dealing food and clothing to her thirteen poor folk, but in her bower, with her youngest son, a two-years' boy, at her knee. She was listening with a face of shame and horror to the complaint of Herluin, Steward of Peterborough, who had fallen in this afternoon with Hereward and his crew of housecretes.

To keep a following of stout housecarles, or men-at-arms, was the pride as well as the duty of an Anglo-Danish Lord, as it was, till lately, of a Scoto-Danish Highland Laird. And Hereward, in imitation of his father and his elder brother, must needs have his following from the time he was but fifteen years old. All the unruly youths of the neighbourhood, sons of free "Holders," who owed some sort of military service to Earl Leofric; Geri, Hereward's cousin; Winter, whom he called his brother-in-arms; the Wulfrics, the Wulfards, the Azers, and many another wild blade, had banded themselves round a young nobleman more unruly than themselves. Their names were already a terror to all decent folk, at wakes and fairs, alehouses and village sports. They atoned, be it remembered, for their early sins, by making those names in after years a terror to the invaders of their native land: but as yet their prowess was limited to

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drunken brawls and faction-fights; to upsetting old women at their work, levying black mail from quiet chapmen on the high-road, or bringing back in triumph, sword in hand and club on shoulder, their leader Hereward from some duel which his insolence had provoked.

But this time, if the story of the steward was to be believed, Hereward and his housecarles had taken an ugly stride forward toward the pit. They had met him riding along, intent upon his psalter, home towards his abbey from its cell at Bourne—"Whereon your son, most gracious lady, bade me stand, saying that his men were thirsty; and he had no money to buy ale withal, and none so likely to help him thereto as a fat priest—for so he scandalously termed me, who, as your ladyship knows, am leaner than the minster bell-ropes, with fasting Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year, beside the vigils of the saints, and the former and latter Lents.

"But when he saw who I was, as if inspired by a malignant spirit, he shouted out my name, and bade his companions throw me to the ground."

"Throw you to the ground?" shuddered the Lady Godiva.

"In much mire, madam. After which he took my palfrey, saying that heaven's gate was too lowly for men on horseback to get in thereat; and then my marten's fur gloves and cape which your gracious self bestowed on me, alleging that the rules of my order allowed only one garment, and no furs save catskins

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and suchlike. And lastly—I tremble while I relate, thinking not of the loss of my poor money, but the loss of an immortal soul—took from me a purse with sixteen silver pennies, which I had collected from our tenants for the use of the monastery, and said blasphemously that I and mine had cheated your ladyship, and therefore him your son, out of many a fat manor ere now; and it was but fair that he should tithe the rents thereof, as he should never get the lands out of our claws again; with more of the like, which I blush to repeat—And so left me to trudge hither in the mire."

"Wretched boy!" said the Lady Godiva, and hid her face in her hands; "and more wretched I to have brought such a son into the world!"

The monk had hardly finished his doleful story, when there was a pattering of heavy feet, a noise of men shouting and laughing outside, and a voice above all calling for the monk by name, which made that good man crouch behind the curtain of Lady Godiva's bed. The next moment the door of the bower was thrown violently open, and in swaggered a noble lad eighteen years old. His face was of extraordinary beauty, save that the lower jaw was too long and heavy, and that his eyes wore a strange and almost sinister expression, from the fact that the one of them was grey and the other blue. He was short, but of immense breadth of chest and strength of limb; while his delicate hands and feet and long locks of golden hair marked him of most noble, and even, as he really

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was, of ancient royal race. He was dressed in a gaudy costume, resembling on the whole that of a Highland chieftain. His wrists and throat were tattooed in blue patterns;[1] and he carried sword and dagger, a gold ring round his neck,[2] and gold rings on his wrists. He was a lad to have gladdened the eyes of any mother: but there was no gladness in the Lady Godiva's eyes as she received him, nor had there been for many a year. She looked on him with sternness, with all but horror: and he, his face flushed with wine, which he had tossed off as he passed through the hall, to steady his nerves for the coming storm, looked at her with smiling defiance, the result of long estrangement between mother and son.

"Well, my lady," said he, ere she could speak, "I heard that this good fellow was here; and came home

[1] Some antiquaries have denied, on the ground of insufficient evidence, that the English tattooed themselves. Others have referred to some such custom the secret marks by which heroes are so often recognised in old romances, as well as those by which Edith the Swan-neck is said to have recognised Harold's body on the field of Hastings. Hereward is, likewise, recognised by "signis satis exquisitis in corpore designantia vulnera tenuissimorum cicatricum." I am not answerable for the Latin; but as I understand it, it refers not to war-wounds but to very delicate marks. Moreover, William of Malmesbury, sub anno 1066, seems sufficiently explicit when he says that the English "adorned their skins with punctured designs."

May not our sailors' fashion of tattooing their arms and chests with strange devices be a remnant of this very fashion, kept up, if not originated by, the desire that the corpse should be recognised after death?

[2] Earl Waltheof appears to Ingulf in a dream, a few years after, with a gold torc round his neck.

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as fast as I could, to see that he told you as few lies as possible."

"He has told me," said she, "that you have robbed the church of God."

"Robbed him, it may be, an old hoody crow, against whom I have a grudge of ten years' standing."

"Wretched, wretched boy! What wickedness next? Know you not, that he who robs the Church robs God Himself?"

"If a man sin against another," put in the monk from behind the curtain, "the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?"

"Who indeed?" cried Lady Godiva. "Think, think, hapless boy, what it is to go about the world henceforth with the wrath of Him who made it abiding on you—cut off from the protection of all angels, open to the assaults of all devils! How will your life be safe a moment, from lightning, from flood, from slipping knife, from stumbling horse, from some hidden and hideous death? If the fen-fiends lure you away to drown you in the river, or the wood-fiends leap on you in the thicket to wring your neck, of what use to you then the suffrages of the saints, or the sign of the holy cross? What help, what hope, for you—for me—but that you must perish foully, and, it may be, never find a grave?"

Lady Godiva—as the constant associate of clerks and monks—spoke after an artificial and Latinised fashion, at which Hereward was not wont to laugh

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and jest: but as he believed, no less than his pious mother, in innumerable devils and ghosts, and other uncanny creatures, who would surely do him a mischief if they could, he began to feel somewhat frightened; but he answered none the less stoutly:—

"As for devils, and such like, I never saw one yet, by flood or field, night or day. And if one comes, I must just copy old Baldwin Bras-de-Fer of Flanders, and see whether the devil or I can hit hardest. As for the money—I have no grudge against St. Peter; and I will warrant myself to rob some one else of sixteen pennies ere long, and pay the saint back every farthing."

"The saint takes not the fruits of robbery. He would hurl them far away, by might divine, were they laid upon his altar," quoth the Steward.

"I wonder he has not hurled thee away long ago, then, with thy gifts about thine ears; for thou hast brought many a bag of grist to his mill, ere now, that was as foully earned as aught of mine. I tell thee, man, if thou art wise, thou wilt hold thy tongue, and let me and St. Peter settle this quarrel between us. I have a long score against thee, as thou knowest, which a gentle battery in the greenwood has but half paid off; and I warn thee not to make it longer by thy tongue, lest I shorten the said tongue for thee with cold steel."

"What does he mean?" asked Godiva, shuddering.

"This!" quoth Hereward, fiercely enough; "That

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this monk forgets that I have been a monk myself, or should have been one by now, if you, my pious mother, had had your will of me, as you may if you like of that baby there at your knee. He forgets why I left Peterborough Abbey, when Winter and I turned all the priest's books upside down, in the choir, and they would have flogged us—me, the Earl's son—me, the Viking's son—me, the champion as I will be yet, and make all lands ring with the fame of my deeds, as they rang with the fame of my forefathers, before they became the slaves of monks; and how, when Winter and I got hold of the kitchen spits, and up to the top of the peat-stack by Bolldyke-gate, and held them all at bay there, a whole abbeyful of cowards there against two seven-years' children,—it was that weasel there bade set the peat-stack alight under us, and so bring us down; and would have done it, too, had it not been for my uncle Brand, the only man that I care for in this wide world. Do you think I have not owed you a grudge ever since that day, monk? And do you think I will not pay it? Do you think I would not have burned Peterborough Minster over your head before now, had it not been for uncle Brand's sake? See that I do not do it yet. See that when there is another Prior in Borough you do not find Hereward the Berserker smoking you out some dark night, as he would smoke a wasps' nest. And I will, by——"

"Hereward, Hereward!" cried his mother, "godless, god-forgotten boy, what words are these? Silence,

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before you burden your soul with an oath which the devils in hell will accept, and force you to keep," and she sprang up, and seizing his arm, laid her hand upon his mouth.

Hereward looked at her majestic face, once lovely, now stern and careworn; and trembled for a moment. Had there been any tenderness in it, his history might have been a very different one: but alas! there was none. Not that she was in herself untender: but that her great piety (call it not superstition, for it was then the only form known or possible to pure and devout souls) was so outraged by this insult to that clergy whose willing slave she had become, that the only method of reclaiming the sinner had been long forgotten in genuine horror at his sin. "Is it not enough," she went on sternly, "that you should have become the bully and the ruffian of all the fens?—that Hereward the leaper, Hereward the wrestler, Hereward the thrower of the hammer—sports after all only fit for the sons of slaves, should be also Hereward the drunkard, Hereward the common fighter, Hereward the breaker of houses, Hereward the leader of mobs of boon companions who bring back to us, in shame and sorrow, the days when our heathen forefathers ravaged this land with fire and sword? Is it not enough for me that my son should be a common stabber——?"

"Whoever called me stabber to you, lies. If I have killed men, or had them killed, I have done it in fair fight."

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But she went on unheeding—"Is it not enough that after having squandered on your fellows all the money that you could wring from my bounty, or win at your base sports, you should have robbed your own father, collected his rents behind his back, taken money and goods from his tenants by threats and blows: but that, after outraging them, you must add to all this a worse sin likewise, outraging God, and driving me—me who have borne with you, me who have concealed all for your sake—to tell your father that of which the very telling will turn my hair to grey?"

"So you will tell my father?" said Hereward coolly.

"And if I should not, this monk himself is bound to do so, or his superior, your uncle Brand."

"My uncle Brand will not, and your monk dare not."

"Then I must. I have loved you long and well: but there is one thing which I must love better than you, and that is my conscience and my Maker."

"Those are two things, my lady mother, and not one; so you had better not confound them. As for the latter, do you not think that He who made the world is well able to defend His own property—if the lands, and houses, and cattle, and money, which these men wheedle and threaten and forge out of you and my father, are really his property, and not merely their plunder? As for your conscience, my lady mother, really you have done so many good deeds in

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your life, that it might be beneficial to you to do a bad deed once in a way, so as to keep your soul in a wholesome state of humility."

The monk groaned aloud. Lady Godiva groaned: but it was inwardly. There was silence for a moment. Both were abashed by the lad's utter shamelessness.

"And you will tell my father?" said he again. "He is at the old miracle-worker's court at Westminster. He will tell the miracle-worker; and I shall be outlawed."

"And if you be, wretched boy, whom have you to blame but yourself? Can you expect that the King, sainted even as he is before his death, dare pass over such an offence against Holy Church?"

"Blame? I shall blame no one. Pass over? I hope he will not pass over it. I only want an excuse like that for turning kempery-man—knight-errant, as those Norman puppies call it—like Regnar Lodbrog, or Frithiof, or Harold Hardraade; and try what a man can do for himself in the world with nothing to help him in heaven and earth, with neither saint nor angel, friend nor counsellor, to see to him, save his wits and his good sword. So send off the messenger, good mother mine; and I will promise you I will not have him ham-strung on the way, as some of my housecarles would do if I but held up my hand; and let the miracle-monger fill up the measure of his folly, by making an enemy of one more bold fellow in the world."

And he swaggered out of the room.

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When he was gone, the Lady Godiva bowed her head into her lap, and wept long and bitterly. Neither her maidens nor the priest dare speak to her for nigh an hour: but at the end of that time she lifted up her head, and settled her face again, till it was like that of a marble saint over a minster door; and called for ink and paper, and wrote her letter; and then asked for a trusty messenger who should carry it up to Westminster.

"None so swift or sure," said the house steward, "as Martin Lightfoot."

Lady Godiva shook her head. "I mistrust that man," she said. "He is too fond of my poor—of the Lord Hereward."

"He is a strange one, my lady, and no one knows whence he came, and I sometimes fancy whither he may go either: but ever since my Lord threatened to hang him for talking with my young master, he has never spoken to him, nor scarcely, indeed, to living soul. And one thing there is makes him or any man sure, as long as he is well paid; and that is, that he cares for nothing in heaven or earth save himself and what he can get."

So Martin Lightfoot was sent for. He came in straight into the lady's bedchamber, after the simple fashion of those days. He was a tall, bony man, as was to be expected from his nickname; lean as a rake, with a long hooked nose, a scanty brown beard, and a high conical head. His only garment was a shabby grey woollen tunic which served him both as coat and kilt,

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and laced brogues of untanned hide. He might have been any age from twenty to forty; but his face was disfigured with deep scars and long exposure to the weather. He dropped on one knee, holding his greasy cap in his hand, and looked, not at his lady's face, but at her feet, with a stupid and frightened expression. She knew very little of him, save that her husband had picked him up upon the road as a wanderer some five years since; that he had been employed as a doer of odd jobs and runner of messages; and that he was supposed from his taciturnity and strangeness to have something uncanny about him.

"Martin," said the lady, "they tell me that you are a silent and a prudent man."

"That am I.

" 'Tongue breaketh bane,'
Though she herself hath nane."

"I shall try you: do you know your way to London?"

"Yes. Cardyke, King Street, Ermine Street, London town."

"To your lord's lodgings?"

"Yes."

"How long shall you be going there with this letter?"

"A day and a half."

"When shall you be back hither?"

"On the fourth day."

"And you will go to my lord and deliver this letter safely?"

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"Yes."

"And safely bring back an answer?"

"Nay, not that."

"Not that?"

Martin made a doleful face, and drew his hand first across his leg, and then across his throat, as hints of the doom which he expected.

"He—the Lord Hereward—has promised not to let thee be harmed."

Martin gave a start, and his dull eyes flashed out a moment: but the next he answered, as curtly as was his wont—

"The more fool he. But women's bodkins are sharp, as well as men's knives."

"Bodkins? Whose? What babblest of?"

"Them," said Martin, pointing to the bower maidens—girls of good family who stood round; chosen for their beauty, after the fashion of those times, to attend on great ladies. There was a cry of angry and contemptuous denial, not unmixed with something like laughter, which showed that Martin had but spoken the truth. Hereward, in spite of all his sins, was the darling of his mother's bower; and there was not one of the damsels but would have done anything short of murder to have prevented Martin carrying the letter.

"Silence, man!" said Lady Godiva, so sternly that Martin saw that he had gone too far. "How knows such as thou what is in this letter?"

"All the town must know," said Martin sullenly.

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"Best that they should, and know that right is done here," said she, trying to be stern.

"I will take it," said Martin. He held out his hand, took it, and looked at it, but upside down and without any attempt to read it.

"His own mother!" said he after awhile.

"What is that to thee?" said Lady Godiva, blushing and kindling.

"Nothing — I had no mother. But God has one."

"What meanest thou, knave? Wilt thou take the letter or no?"

"I will take it." And he again looked at it, without rising off his knee. "His own father, too."

"What is that to thee, I say again?"

"Nothing—I have no father. But God's Son has one."

"What wilt thou, thou strange man?" asked she, puzzled and half-frightened; "and how camest thou, again I ask, to know what is in this letter?"

"All the town, I say again, must know. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. On the fourth day from this I will be back."

And Martin rose, and putting the letter solemnly into the purse at his girdle, shot out of the door with clenched teeth, as a man upon a fixed purpose which it would lighten his heart to carry out. He ran rapidly through the large outer hall, past the long oak table, at which Hereward and his boon companions were drinking and roystering. As he passed

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the young lord he cast on him a look so full of meaning, that though Hereward knew not what the meaning was, it startled him, and for a moment softened him. Did this man, who had sullenly avoided him for more than two years, whom he had looked on as a clod or a post in the field beneath his notice, since he could be of no use to him—did this man still care for him? Hereward had reason to know better than most, that there was something strange and uncanny about the man. Did he mean him well? Or had he some grudge against him, which made him undertake this journey willingly and out of spite—possibly with the will to make bad worse? For an instant Hereward's heart misgave him. He would stop the letter at all risks. "Hold him!" he cried to his comrades.

But Martin turned to him, laid his finger on his lips, smiled kindly, and saying, "You promised!" caught up a loaf from the table, slipped from amongst them like an eel, and darted through the door, and out of the close. They followed him to the great gate, and there stopped, some cursing, some laughing. To give Martin Lightfoot a yard of law was never to come up with him again. Some called for bows to bring him down with a parting shot. But Hereward forbade them; and stood leaning against the gate-post, watching him trot on like a lean wolf over the lawn, till he sprang upon the Car-dyke bank, and fled straight south into the misty fen.

"Now lads," said Hereward, "home with you all,

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and make your peace with your fathers. In this house you never drink ale again."

They looked at him, surprised.

"You are disbanded, my gallant army. As long as I could cut long thongs out of other men's hides, I could feed you like earls' sons: but now I must feed myself; and a dog over his bone wants no company. Outlawed I shall be, before the week is out; and unless you wish to be outlawed too, you will obey orders, and home."

"We will follow you to the world's end," cried some.

"To the rope's end, lads: that is all you will get in my company. Go home with you, and those who feel a calling, let them turn monks; and those who have not, let them learn

> " ' For to plough and to sow,
> And to reap and to mow,
> And to be a farmer's boy.'

Good night."

And he went in, and shut the great gates after him, leaving them astonished.

To take his advice, and go home, was the simplest thing to be done. A few of them on their return were soundly beaten, and deserved it; a few were hidden by their mothers for a week in hay-lofts and hen-roosts, till their fathers' anger had passed away. But only one seems to have turned monk or clerk, and that was Leofric the Unlucky, godson of the great Earl, and poet-in-ordinary to the band.

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The next morning at dawn Hereward mounted his best horse, armed himself from head to foot, and rode over to Peterborough.

When he came to the abbey-gate, he smote thereon with his lance-butt, till the porter's teeth rattled in his head for fear.

"Let me in!" he shouted. "I am Hereward Leofricsson. I must see my uncle Brand."

"Oh, my most gracious lord," cried the porter, thrusting his head out of the wicket, "what is this that you have been doing to our Steward?"

"The tithe of what I will do unless you open the gate!"

"Oh, my lord!" said the porter, as he opened it, "if our Lady and St. Peter would but have mercy on your fair face, and convert your soul to the fear of God and man——"

"She would make me as good an old fool as you. Fetch my uncle the Prior."

The porter obeyed. The son of Earl Leofric was as a young lion among the sheep in those parts; and few dare say him nay, certainly not the monks of Peterborough; moreover, the good porter could not help being strangely fond of Hereward—as was every one whom he did not insult, rob, or kill.

Out came Brand, a noble elder: more fit, from his eye and gait, to be a knight than a monk. He looked sadly at Hereward.

"'Dear is bought the honey that is licked off the thorn,' quoth Hending," said he.

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"Hending bought his wisdom by experience, I suppose," said Hereward, "and so must I. So I am just starting out to see the world, uncle."

"Naughty, naughty boy! If we had thee safe here again for a week, we would take this hot blood out of thee, and send thee home in thy right mind."

"Bring a rod and whip me, then. Try, and you shall have your chance. Every one else has had, and this is the end of their labours."

"By the chains of St. Peter," quoth the monk, "that is just what thou needest.—To hoist thee on such another fool's back, truss thee up, and lay it on lustily, till thou art ashamed. To treat thee as a man is only to make thee a more heady blown-up ass than thou art already."

"True, most wise uncle. And therefore my still wiser parents are going to treat me like a man indeed, and send me out into the world to seek my fortunes!"

"Eh?"

"They are going to prove how thoroughly they trust me to take care of myself, by outlawing me. Eh? say I in return. Is not that an honour, and a proof that I have not shown myself a fool, though I may have a madman?"

"Outlaw you? Oh, my boy, my darling, my pride! Get off thy horse, and don't sit up there, hand on hip, like a turbaned Saracen, defying God and man: but come down and talk reason to me, for the sake of St. Peter and all saints."

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Hereward threw himself off his horse, and threw his arms round his uncle's neck.

"Pish! Now, uncle, don't cry, do what you will; lest I cry too. Help me to be a man while I live, even if I go to the black place when I die."

"It shall not be!" . . . and the monk swore by all the relics in Peterborough minster.

"It must be. It shall be. I like to be outlawed. I want to be outlawed. It makes one feel like a man. There is not an earl in England, save my father, who has not been outlawed in his time. My brother Algar will be outlawed before he dies, if he has the spirit of a man in him. It is the fashion, my uncle, and I must follow it. So hey for the merry green wood, and the long ships, and the swan's bath, and all the rest of it. Uncle, you will lend me fifty silver pennies?"

"I? I would not lend thee one, if I had it, which I have not. And yet, old fool that I am, I believe I would."

"I would pay thee back honestly. I shall go down to Constantinople to the Varangers, get my Polotaswarf[1] out of the Kaiser's treasure, and pay thee back five to one."

"What does this son of Belial here?" asked an austere voice.

"Ah! Abbot Leofric, my very good lord. I have come to ask hospitality of you for some three days.

[1] See "The Heimskringla," Harold Hardraade's Saga, for the meaning of this word.

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By that time I shall be a wolf's head, and out of the law: and then, if you will give me ten minutes' start, you may put your bloodhounds on my track, and see which runs fastest, they or I. You are a gentleman, and a man of honour; so I trust you to feed my horse fairly the meanwhile, and not to let your monks poison me."

The Abbot's face relaxed. He tried to look as solemn as he could; but he ended in bursting into a very great laughter.

"The insolence of this lad passes the miracles of all saints. He robs St. Peter on the highway, breaks into his abbey, insults him to his face, and then asks him for hospitality; and——"

"And gets it," quoth Hereward.

"What is to be done with him, Brand, my friend? If we turn him out——"

"Which we cannot do," said Brand, looking at the well mailed and armed lad, "without calling in half-a-dozen of our men-at-arms."

"In which case there would be blood shed, and scandal made in the holy precincts."

"And nothing gained; for yield he would not till he was killed outright, which Heaven forbid!"

"Amen. And if he stay here, he may be persuaded to repentance."

"And restitution."

"As for that," quoth Hereward (who had remounted his horse from prudential motives, and set him athwart the gateway, so that there was no chance

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of the doors being slammed behind him), "if either of you will lend me sixteen pennies, I will pay them back to you and St. Peter before I die, with interest enough to satisfy any Jew, on the word of a gentleman and an earl's son."

The Abbot burst again into a great laughter. "Come in, thou graceless renegade, and we will see to thee and thy horse; and I will pray to St. Peter; and I doubt not he will have patience with thee, for he is very merciful; and after all, thy parents have been exceeding good to us, and the righteousness of the father, like his sins, is sometimes visited on the children."

Now, why were the two ecclesiastics so uncanonically kind to this wicked youth?

Perhaps because both the old bachelors were wishing from their hearts that they had just such a son of their own. And beside, Earl Leofric was a very great man indeed; and the wind might change; for it is an unstable world.

"Only, mind one thing," said the naughty boy, as he dismounted, and halloed to a lay-brother to see to his horse—"don't let me see the face of that Herluin."

"And why? You have wronged him, and he will forgive you, doubtless, like a good Christian as he is."

"That is his concern. But if I see him, I cut off his head. And, as uncle Brand knows, I always sleep with my sword under my pillow."

"Oh, that such a mother should have borne such a son!" groaned the Abbot, as they went in.

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On the fifth day came Martin Lightfoot, and found Hereward in Prior Brand's private cell.

"Well?" asked Hereward, coolly.

"Is he?——Is he——?" stammered Brand, and could not finish his sentence.

Martin nodded.

Hereward laughed — a loud, swaggering, uneasy laugh.

"See what it is to be born of just and pious parents. Come, Master Trot-alone, speak out and tell us all about it. Thy lean wolf's legs have run to some purpose. Open thy lean wolf's mouth and speak for once, lest I ease thy legs for the rest of thy life by a cut across the hams. Find thy lost tongue, I say!"

"Walls have ears, as well as the wild wood," said Martin.

"We are safe here," said the Prior; "so speak, and tell us the whole truth."

"Well, when the Earl read the letter, he turned red, and pale again, and then nought but—'Men, follow me to the King at Westminster.' So we went, all with our weapons, twenty or more, along the Strand, and up into the King's new hall; and a grand hall it is, but not easy to get into, for the crowd of monks and beggars on the stairs, hindering honest folks' business. And there sat the King on a high settle, with his pink face and white hair, looking as royal as a bell-wether new washed; and on either side of him, on the same settle, sat the old fox and the young wolf."[1]

[1] It must be remembered that the house of Godwin is spoken of throughout this book by hereditary enemies.

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"Godwin and Harold? And where was the Queen?"

"Sitting on a stool at his feet, with her hands together as if she were praying, and her eyes downcast, as demure as any cat. And so is fulfilled the story, how the sheep dog went out to get married, and left the fox, the wolf, and the cat to guard the flock."

"If thou hast found thy tongue," said Brand, "thou art like enough to lose it again by slice of knife, talking such ribaldry of dignities. Dost not know"—and he sank his voice—"that Abbot Leofric is Earl Harold's man, and that Harold himself made him abbot?"

"I said—Walls have ears. It was you who told me that we were safe. However, I will bridle the unruly one." And he went on. "And your father walked up the hall, his left hand on his sword-hilt, looking an earl all over, as he is."

"He is that," said Hereward in a low voice.

"And he bowed; and the most magnificent, powerful, and virtuous Godwin (Is that speaking evil of dignities?) would have beckoned him up to sit on the high settle: but he looked straight at the King, as if there were never a Godwin or a Godwinsson on earth, and cried as he stood:—

"'Justice, my Lord the King!'

"And at that the King turned pale, and said: 'Who? What? Oh miserable world! Oh last days drawing nearer and nearer! Oh earth, full of violence

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and blood! Who has wronged thee now, most dear and noble Earl?'

"'Justice against my own son.'

"At that the fox looked at the wolf, and the wolf at the fox, and if they did not smile, it was not for want of will, I warrant. But your father went on, and told all his story; and when he came to your robbing master monk—'Oh, apostate!' cries the bell-wether, 'oh, spawn of Beelzebub! excommunicate him, with bell, book, and candle. May he be thrust down with Korah, Balaam, and Iscariot, to the most Stygian pot of the sempiternal Tartarus.'

"And at that your father smiled. 'That is bishops' work;' says he, 'and I want king's work from you, Lord King. Outlaw me this young rebel's sinful body, as by law you can; and leave his sinful soul to the priests—or to God's mercy, which is like to be more than theirs.'

"Then the Queen looked up. 'Your own son, noble Earl? Think of what you are doing—and one, too, who all say is so gallant and so fair. Oh persuade him, father—persuade him, Harold my brother—or, if you cannot persuade him, persuade the King at least, and save this poor youth from exile.'"

"Puss Velvet-paw knew well enough," said Hereward in a low voice, "that the way to harden my father's heart was to set Godwin and Harold on softening it. They ask my pardon from the King? I would not take it at their asking, even if my father would."

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"There spoke a true Leofricsson," said Brand, in spite of himself.

"'By the ——' (and Martin repeated a certain very solemn oath), said your father, 'justice I will have, my Lord King. Who talks to me of my own son? You put me into my earldom to see justice done, and law obeyed; and how shall I make others keep within bound if I am not to keep in my own flesh and blood? Here is this land running headlong to ruin, because every nobleman—ay, every churl who owns a manor, if he dares—must needs arm and saddle, and levy war on his own behalf, and harry and slay the King's lieges, if he have not garlic to his roast goose every time he chooses'—and there your father did look at Godwin, once and for all,—'and shall I let my son follow the fashion, and do his best to leave the land open and weak for Norseman, or Dane, or Frenchman, or whoever else hopes next to mount the throne of a king who is too holy to leave an heir behind him?'"

"Ahoi! Martin the silent! Where learnedst thou so suddenly the trade of preaching? I thought thou hadst kept thy wind for thy running this two years past. Thou would make as good a talker among the Witan as Godwin himself. Thou givest it us, all word for word, and voice and gesture withal, as if thou wert King Edward's French Chancellor."

Martin smiled. "I am like Falada the horse, my lords, who could only speak to his own true princess. Why I held my tongue of late, was only

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lest they should cut my head off for talking, as they did poor Falada's."

"Thou art a very crafty knave," said Brand, "and hast had clerk-learning in thy time, I can see, and made bad use of it. I misdoubt very much that thou art some runaway monk."

"That am I not, by St. Peter's chains!" said Martin, in an eager terrified voice. "Lord Hereward, I came hither as your father's messenger and servant. You will see me safe out of this abbey, like an honourable gentleman!"

"I will. All I know of him, uncle, is that he used to tell me stories, when I was a boy, of enchanters and knights and dragons, and such like; and got into trouble for filling my head with such fancies. Now let him tell his story in peace."

"He shall: but I misdoubt the fellow very much. He talks as if he knew Latin; and what business has a foot-running slave to do that?"

So Martin went on, somewhat abashed. "'And,' said your father, 'justice I will have, and leave injustice, and the overlooking of it, to those who wish to profit thereby.'

"And at that Godwin smiled, and said to the King, 'The Earl is wise, as usual, and speaks like a very Solomon. Your Majesty must, in spite of your own tenderness of heart, have these letters of outlawry made out.'

"Then all our men murmured—and I as loud as any. But old Surturbrand the housecarle did more;

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for out he stepped to your father's side, and spoke right up before the King.

"'Bonny times,' he said, 'I have lived to see, when a lad of Earl Oslac's blood is sent out of the land, a beggar and a wolf's head, for playing a boy's trick or two, and upsetting a shaveling priest! We managed such wild young colts better, we Vikings who conquered the Danelagh. If Canute had had a son like Hereward—as would to God he had had—he would have dealt with him as old Swend Forkbeard (God grant I meet him in Valhalla, in spite of all priests!) did by Canute himself when he was young, and kicked and plunged awhile at being first bitted and saddled.'

"'What does the man say?' asked the King, for old Surturbrand was talking broad Danish.

"'He is a housecarle of mine, Lord King, a good man and true; but old age and rough Danish blood has made him forget that he stands before kings and earls.'

"'By the head of Odin's horse, Earl!' says Surturbrand, 'I have fought knee to knee beside a braver king than that there, and nobler earls than ever a one here; and was never afraid, like a free Dane, to speak my mind to them, by sea or land. And if the King, with his French ways, does not understand a plain man's talk, the two earls yonder do right well; and I say—Deal by this lad in the good old fashion. Give him half-a-dozen long ships, and what crews he can get together, and send him out, as Canute would have

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done, to seek his fortune like a Viking; and if he comes home with plenty of wounds, and plenty of plunder, give him an earldom as he deserves. Do you ask your countess, Earl Godwin—she is of the right Danish blood, God bless her! though she is your wife,—and see if she does not know how to bring a naughty lad to his senses.'

"Then Harold the Earl said: 'The old man is right, King, listen to what he says.' And he told him all quite eagerly."

"How did you know that? Can you understand French?"

"I am a poor idiot, give me a halfpenny," said Martin, in a doleful voice, as he threw into his face and whole figure a look of helpless stupidity and awkwardness, which set them both laughing.

But Hereward checked himself. "And thou thinkest he was in earnest?"

"As sure as there are holy crows in Crowland. But it was of no use. Your father got a parchment, with an outlandish Norman seal hanging to it, and sent me off with it that same night to give to the lawman. So wolf's head you are, my lord, and there is no use crying over spilt milk."

"And Harold spoke for me? Not that I care, but it will be as well to tell Abbot Leofric that, in case he be inclined to turn traitor, and refuse to open the gates. Once outside them, I fear not mortal man."

"My poor boy, there will be many a one whom thou hast wronged only too ready to lie in wait for

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thee, now thy life is in every man's hand. If the outlawry is published, thou hadst best start to-night, and get past Lincoln before morning."

"I shall stay quietly here, and get a good night's rest; and then ride out to-morrow morning in the face of the whole shire. No, not a word! You would not have me sneak away like a coward!"

Brand smiled and shrugged his shoulders: being very much of the same mind.

"At least, go north."

"And why north?"

"You have no quarrel in Northumberland, and the King's writ runs very slowly there, if at all. Old Siward Digre may stand your friend."

"He? he is a fast friend of my father's."

"What of that? The old Viking will like you none the less for having shown a touch of his own temper. Go to him, I say, and tell him that I sent you."

"But he is fighting the Scots beyond the Forth."

"So much the better. There will be good work for you to do. And Gilbert of Ghent is up there too, I hear, trying to settle himself among the Scots. He is your mother's kinsman; and as for your being an outlaw, he wants hard hitters and hard riders, and all is fish that comes to his net. Find him out too, and tell him that I sent you."

"You are a good old uncle," said Hereward. "Why were you not a soldier?"

Brand laughed somewhat sadly.

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"If I had been a soldier, lad, where wouldst thou have looked for a friend this day? No. God has done what was merciful with me and my sins. May He do the same by thee and thine."

Hereward made an impatient movement. He disliked any word which seemed likely to soften his own hardness of heart. But he kissed his uncle lovingly on both cheeks.

"By-the-by, Martin—any message from my lady mother?"

"None!"

"Quite right and pious. I am an enemy to Holy Church and therefore to her. Good night, uncle."

"Hey?" asked Brand; "where is that footman—Martin you call him? I must have another word with him."

But Martin was gone.

"No matter. I shall question him sharply enough to-morrow, I warrant."

And Hereward went out to his lodging: while the good Prior went to his prayers.

When Hereward entered his room, Martin started out of the darkness, and followed him in. Then he shut-to the door carefully, and pulled out a bag.

"There was no message from my lady: but there was this."

The bag was full of money.

"Why did you not tell me of this before?"

"Never show money before a monk."

"Villain! would you mistrust my uncle?"

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"Any man with a shaven crown. St. Peter is his God, and Lord, and conscience; and if he saw but the shine of a penny, for St. Peter he would want it."

"And he shall have it," quoth Hereward; and flung out of the room, and into his uncle's.

"Uncle, I have money. I am come to pay back what I took from the Steward, and as much more into the bargain." And he told out eight-and-thirty pieces.

"Thank God and all his saints!" cried Brand, weeping abundantly for joy; for he had acquired, by long devotion, the donum lachrymarum—that lachrymose and somewhat hysterical temperament common among pious monks, and held to be a mark of grace.

"Blessed St. Peter, thou art repaid; and thou wilt be merciful."

Brand believed, in common with all monks then, that Hereward had robbed, not merely the Abbey of Peterborough, but what was more, St. Peter himself; thereby converting into an implacable and internecine foe the chief of the Apostles, the rock on which was founded the whole Church.

"Now, uncle," said Hereward, "do me one good deed in return. Promise me that, if you can help it, none of my poor housecarles shall suffer for my sins. I led them into trouble. I am punished. I have made restitution—at least to St. Peter. See that my father and mother, if they be the Christians they call themselves, forgive and forget all offences except mine."

"I will; so help me all saints and our Lord. Oh,

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my boy, my boy, thou shouldst have been a king's thane, and not an outlaw!"

And he hurried off with the news to the Abbot.

When Hereward returned to his room, Martin was gone.

"Farewell, good men of Peterborough," said Hereward, as he leapt into the saddle next morning. "I had made a vow against you, and came to try you, and see whether you would force me to fulfil it or not. But you have been so kind that I have half repented thereof; and the evil shall not come in the days of Abbot Leofric, nor of Brand the Prior, though it may come in the days of Herluin the Steward, if he live long enough."

"What meanest thou, incarnate fiend, only fit to worship Thor and Odin?" asked Brand.

"That I would burn Goldenborough, and Herluin the Steward within it, ere I die. I fear I shall do it: I fear I must do it. Ten years ago come Lammas, Herluin bade light the peat-stack under me. Do you recollect?"

"And so he did, the hound!" quoth Brand. "I had forgotten that."

"Little Hereward never forgets foe or friend. Ever since, on Lammas night—hold still, horse!—I dream of fire and flame, and of Goldenborough in the glare of it. If it is written in the big book, happen it must; if not, so much the better for Goldenborough, for it is a pretty place, and honest Englishmen in it. Only see that there be not too many Frenchmen crept

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in when I come back, beside our French friend Herluin; and see, too, that there be not a peat-stack handy at the Bolldyke gate—a word is enough to wise men like you. Good-bye!"

"God help thee, thou sinful boy!" said the Abbot.

"Hereward, Hereward! Come back!" cried Brand.

But the boy had spurred his horse through the gateway, and was far down the road.

"Leofric, my friend," said Brand sadly, "this is my sin, and no man's else. And heavy penance will I do for it, till that lad returns in peace."

"Your sin?"

"Mine, Abbot. I persuaded his mother to send him hither to be a monk. Alas! alas! How long will men try to be wiser than Him who maketh men?"

"I do not understand thee," quoth the Abbot. And no more he did.

It was four o'clock on a May morning when Hereward set out to see the world, with good armour on his back, good weapon by his side, good horse between his knees, and—rare luxury in those penniless, though otherwise plentiful days—good money in his purse. What could a lad of eighteen want more, who under the harsh family rule of those times had known nothing of a father's, and but too little of a mother's love? He rode away westward, avoiding, of course, Kesterven and Bourne. Through Milton woods he rode, and lingered but one moment, as he crossed the King Street at Castor Hauglands, to glance up the straight Roman road which led toward his home.

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That led to the old world. He was going to the new; and he pricked his horse gaily on through Bainton woods, struck the Ermine Street on Southorpe Heath, and so on toward the Welland, little dreaming that on those open wolds a palace would one day arise, beside which King Edward's new Hall at Westminster would show but as a tything-barn; and that the great patriot who would build that palace would own, as his birthplace, the very home from which Hereward fled that day.

Over the Welland to Brig Casterton, where Dick Turpin crossed in after times, like him avoiding Stamford town; and then up the Ermine Street, through primeval glades of mighty oak and ash, with holly and thorn beneath, swarming with game, which was as highly preserved then as now, under Canute's severe forest laws. The yellow roes stood and stared at him knee-deep in the young fern; the pheasant called his hens out to feed in the dewy grass; the blackbird and thrush sang out from every bough; the wood-lark trilled above the high oak tops, and sank down on them as his song sank down. And Hereward rode on, rejoicing in it all. It was a fine world in the Bruneswald. What was it then outside? Not to him, as to us, a world circular, round, circumscribed, mapped, botanised, zoologised; a tiny planet about which everybody knows, or thinks they know, everything; but a world infinite, magical, supernatural—because unknown; a vast flat plain reaching no one knew whence or where, save that the mountains stood

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on the four corners thereof to keep it steady, and the four winds of heaven blew out of them; and in the centre, which was to him the Bruneswald, such things as he saw: but beyond, things unspeakable,—dragons, giants, rocs, orcs, witch-whales, griffins, chimeras, satyrs, enchanters, Paynims, Saracen Emirs and Sultans, Kaisers of Constantinople, Kaisers of Ind and of Cathay, and beyond them again of lands as yet unknown. At the very least he could go to Brittany, to the forest of Brocheliaunde, where (so all men said) fairies might be seen bathing in the fountains, and possibly be won and wedded by a bold and dexterous knight, after the fashion of Sir Gruelan.[1] What was there not to be seen and conquered? Where would he go? Where would he not go? For the spirit of Odin the Goer, the spirit which has sent his children round the world, was strong within him. He would go to Ireland, to the Ostmen, or Irish Danes, at Dublin, Waterford, or Cork, and marry some beautiful Irish Princess with grey eyes, and raven locks, and saffron smock, and great gold bracelets from her native hills. No; he would go off to the Orkneys, and join Bruce and Ranald, and the Vikings of the northern seas, and all the hot blood which had found even Norway too hot to hold it; he would sail through witch-whales and icebergs to Ice-

[1] Wace, author of the Roman de Rou, went to Brittany a generation later, to see those same fairies: but had no sport; and sang—

"Fol i alai, fol m'en revins;
Folie quis, por fol me tins."

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land and Greenland, and the sunny lands which they said lay even beyond, across the all but unknown ocean. Or he would go up the Baltic to the Jomsburg Vikings, and fight against Lett and Esthonian heathen, and pierce inland, perhaps, through Puleyn and the bison forests, to the land from whence came the magic swords and the old Persian coins which he had seen so often in the halls of his forefathers. No; he would go South, to the land of sun and wine; and see the magicians of Cordova and Seville; and beard Mussulman hounds worshipping their Mahomets; and perhaps bring home an Emir's daughter,—

> "With more gay gold about her middle,
> Than would buy half Northumberlee."

Or he would go up the Straits, and on to Constantinople and the great Kaiser of the Greeks, and join the Varanger Guard, and perhaps, like Harold Hardraade in his own days, after being cast to the lion for carrying off a fair Greek lady, tear out the monster's tongue with his own hands, and show the Easterns what a Viking's son could do. And as he dreamed of the infinite world, and its infinite wonders, the enchanters he might meet, the jewels he might find, the adventures he might essay, he held that he must succeed in all, with hope, and wit, and a strong arm; and forgot altogether that, mixed up with the cosmogony of an infinite flat plain called the Earth, there was joined also the belief in a flat roof above called Heaven, on which (seen at times in visions through clouds and stars) sat saints, angels, and archangels, for

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ever more harping on their golden harps, and knowing neither vanity nor vexation of spirit, lust nor pride, murder nor war:—and underneath a floor, the name whereof was Hell; the mouths whereof (as all men knew) might be seen on Hecla, Etna, and Stromboli; and the fiends heard within, tormenting, amid fire, and smoke, and clanking chains, the souls of the endlessly lost.

As he rode on, slowly though cheerfully, as a man who will not tire his horse at the beginning of a long day's journey, and knows not where he shall pass the night, he was aware of a man on foot coming up behind him at a slow, steady, loping, wolf-like trot, which in spite of its slowness gained ground on him so fast, that he saw at once that the man could be no common runner.

The man came up; and behold, he was none other than Martin Lightfoot.

"What! art thou here?" asked Hereward, suspiciously, and half cross at seeing any visitor from the old world which he had just cast off. "How gottest thou out of St. Peter's last night?"

Martin's tongue was hanging out of his mouth like a running hound's: but he seemed, like a hound, to perspire through his mouth; for he answered without the least sign of distress, without even pulling in his tongue.

"Over the wall, the moment the Prior's back was turned. I was not going to wait till I was chained up in some rat's hole with a half-hundred of iron on

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my leg, and flogged till I confessed that I was what I am not—a runaway monk."

"And why art here?"

"Because I am going with you."

"Going with me?" said Hereward; "what can I do for thee?"

"I can do for you," said Martin.

"What?"

"Groom your horse, wash your shirt, clean your weapons, find your inn, fight your enemies, cheat your friends—anything and everything. You are going to see the world. I am going with you."

"Thou canst be my servant? A right slippery one, I expect," said Hereward, looking down on him with some suspicion.

"Some are not the rogues they seem. I can keep my secrets and yours too."

"Before I can trust thee with my secrets, I shall expect to know some of thine," said Hereward.

Martin Lightfoot looked up with a cunning smile. "A man can always know his master's secrets if he likes. But that is no reason a master should know his man's."

"Thou shalt tell me thine, man, or I shall ride off and leave thee."

"Not so easy, my lord. Where that heavy horse can go, Martin Lightfoot can follow. But I will tell you one secret, which I never told to living man. I can read and write like any clerk."

"Thou read and write?"

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"Ay, good Latin enough, and French, and Irish too, what is more. And now, because I love you, and because you I will serve, willy nilly, I will tell you all the secrets I have, as long as my breath lasts, for my tongue is rather stiff after that long story about the bell-wether. I was born in Ireland, in Waterford town. My mother was an English slave, one of those that Earl Godwin's wife—not this one that is now, Gyda, but the old one—used to sell out of England by the score, tied together with ropes, boys and girls from Bristol town.[1] Her master, my father that was (I shall know him again), got tired of her, and wanted to give her away to one of his kernes. She would not have that; so he hung her up hand and foot, and beat her that she died. There was an abbey hard by, and the Church laid on him a penance—all that they dared get out of him—that he should give me to the monks, being then a seven-years' boy. Well, I grew up in that abbey; they taught me my fa fa mi fa; but I liked better conning ballads and hearing stories of ghosts and enchanters, such as I used to tell you. I'll tell you plenty more whenever you're tired. Then they made me work; and that I never could abide at all. Then they beat me every day; and that I could abide still less: but always I stuck to my book, for one thing I saw—that learning is power, my lord;

[1] I adopt William of Malmesbury's old story, though there is no good authority for it. Even if a calumny, it fits the mouth of an adherent of the house of Leofric; and an English slave-trade certainly was carried on in those days.

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and that the reason why the monks are masters of the lands is, they are scholars, and you fighting men are none. Then I fell in love (as young blood will) with an Irish lass, when I was full seventeen years old; and when they found out that, they held me down on the floor and beat me till I was well-nigh dead. They put me in prison for a month; and between bread-and-water and darkness I went nigh foolish. They let me out, thinking I could do no more harm to man or lass; and when I found out how profitable folly was, foolish I remained, at least as foolish as seemed good to me. But one night I got into the abbey church, stole therefrom that which I have with me now, and which shall serve you and me in good stead yet—out and away aboard a ship among the buscarles, and off into the Norway sea. But after a voyage or two, so it befell, I was wrecked in the Wash by Botulfston Deeps, and begging my way inland, met with your father, and took service with him, as I have taken service now with you."

"Now, what has made thee take service with me?"

"Because you are you."

"Give me none of thy parables and dark sayings, but speak out like a man. What canst see in me that thou shouldest share an outlaw's fortune with me?"

"I had run away from a monastery; so had you. I hated the monks; so did you. I liked to tell stories,—since I found good to shut my mouth I tell them to myself all day long, sometimes all night too.

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When I found out you liked to hear them, I loved you all the more. Then they told me not to speak to you; I held my tongue. I bided my time. I knew you would be outlawed some day. I knew you would turn Viking and kemperyman, and kill giants and enchanters, and win yourself honour and glory: and I knew I should have my share in it. I knew you would need me some day; and you need me now, and here I am; and if you try to cut me down with your sword, I will dodge you, and follow you, and dodge you again, till I force you to let me be your man. I never loved you as I do now. You let me take that letter safe, like a true hero. You let yourself be outlawed, like a true hero. You made up your mind to see the world, like a true hero. You are the master for me, and with you I will live and die. And now I can talk no more."

"And with me thou shalt live and die," said Hereward, pulling up his horse, and frankly holding out his hand to his new friend.

Martin Lightfoot took his hand, kissed it, licked it almost, as a dog would have done. "I am your man," he said, "Amen; and true man I will prove to you, if you will prove true to me." And he dropped quietly back behind Hereward's horse, as if the business of his life was settled, and his mind utterly at rest.

"There is one more likeness between us," said Hereward, after a few minutes' thought. "If I have robbed a church, thou hast robbed one too. What is

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this precious spoil which is to serve me and thee in such mighty stead?"

Martin drew from inside his shirt and under his waistband a small battle-axe, and handed it up to Hereward. It was a tool the like of which in shape Hereward had seldom seen, and never its equal in beauty. The handle was some fifteen inches long, made of thick strips of black whalebone, curiously bound with silver, and butted with narwhal ivory. This handle was evidently the work of some cunning Norseman of old. But who had been the maker of the blade? It was some eight inches long, with a sharp edge on one side, a sharp crooked pick on the other: of the finest steel, inlaid with strange characters in gold, the work probably of some Circassian, Tartar, or Persian; such a battle-axe as Rustum or Zohrab may have wielded in fight upon the banks of Oxus; one of those magic weapons, brought, men knew not how, out of the magic East, which were hereditary in many a Norse family, and sung of in many a Norse saga.

"Look at it," said Martin Lightfoot. "There is magic in it. It must bring us luck. Whoever holds that must kill his man. It will pick a lock of steel. It will crack a mail corselet as a nut-hatch cracks a nut. It will hew a lance in two at a single blow. Devils and spirits forged it—I know that; Virgilius the Enchanter, perhaps, or Solomon the Great, or whosoever's name is on it, graven there in letters of gold. Handle it, feel its balance; but no—do not handle it too much.

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There is a devil in it, who would make you kill me. Whenever I play with it I long to kill a man. It would be so easy—so easy. Give it me back, my lord, give it me back, lest the devil come through the handle into your palm, and possess you."

Hereward laughed, and gave him back his battle-axe. But he had hardly less doubt of the magic virtues of such a blade than had Martin himself.

"Magical or not, thou wilt not have to hit a man twice with that, Martin, my lad. So we two outlaws are both well armed; and having neither wife nor child, land nor beeves to lose, ought to be a match for any six honest men who may have a grudge against us, and yet have sound reasons at home for running away."

And so those two went northward through the green Bruneswald, and northward through merry Sherwood, and were not seen in that land again for many a year.

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CHAPTER II.

HOW HEREWARD SLEW THE BEAR.[1]

OF Hereward's doings for the next few months nought is known. He may very likely have joined Siward in the Scotch war. He may have looked, wondering, for the first time in his life, upon the bones of the old world, where they rise at Dunkeld out of the lowlands of the Tay; and have trembled lest the black crags

[1] This story of the bear is likely not to be a myth, but among the most authentic of Hereward's famous deeds. So likewise is the story of the Cornish princess, and of his deeds in Flanders. For Richard of Ely, if I understand him rightly, says that he got his information from the actual MSS. of Leofric of Bourne, Hereward's Mass-Priest, "up to the place where he came home again;" and more wise than the average of monk writers, kept to "the crude matter, too little composite and ornate by the care of any trained intellect, or by dialectic and rhetoric enigmas." For "always he was deluded by vain hope, or from the beginning, by folks saying that in this place and that is a great book about the same man's deeds," which book never appearing, he seems to have finished his work from popular tradition, leaving, to do him justice, the dialectic and rhetorical enigmas to be added by the author of the Liber Eliensis; but, like him, wandering sadly in his chronology. I have retained every detail, I believe, which he gives in the early part of his story, as valuable and all but unique sketches of the manners of the eleventh century.

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of Birnam should topple on his head with all their pines. He may have marched down from that famous leaguer with the Gospatrics and Dolfins, and the rest of the kindred of Crinan, and of Siward, of the murdered Duncan, and the outraged Sibilla. He may have helped himself to bring Birnam Wood to Dunsinane, on the day of the Seven Sleepers, and heard Siward, when his son Asbiorn's corpse was carried into camp,[1] ask only, "Has he all his wounds in front?" He may have seen old Siward, after Macbeth's defeat (not death, as Shakespeare relates the story), go back to Northumbria "with such booty as no man had obtained before,"—a proof—if the fact be fact—that the Scotch lowlands were not, in the eleventh century, the poor and barbarous country which some have reported them to have been.

All this is not only possible, but probable enough, the dates considered: the chroniclers, however, are silent. They only say that Hereward was in those days beyond Northumberland with Gilbert of Ghent.

Gisebert, Gislebert, Gilbert, Guibert, Goisbricht, of Ghent,[2] who afterwards owned, by chance of war, many a fair manor in Lincolnshire and elsewhere, was one of those valiant Flemings who settled along the

[1] Shakespeare calls his son "young Siward." He, too, was slain in the battle: but he was old Siward's nephew.

[2] Our English genealogists make him son of Baldwin of Mons and Richilda of Hainault, which is a manifest error. Mr. Forester, in his learned notes to Ordericus Vitalis, says that he was son of Ralf, the Lord of Alost; and confirms the story that his eldest son died prematurely. He may have been nevertheless a near relation of the Marquis Baldwin.

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east and north-east coast of Scotland in the eleventh century. They fought with the Celtic Maolmors, and then married with their daughters; got to themselves lands by the title-deed of the sword; and so became —the famous Freskin the Fleming especially—the ancestors of the finest aristocracy, both physically and intellectually, in the world. They had their connections, moreover, with the Norman court of Rouen, through the Duchess Matilda, daughter of their old Seigneur, Baldwin Marquis of Flanders; their connections, too, with the English Court, through Countess Judith, wife of Earl Tosti Godwinsson, another daughter of Baldwin's. Their friendship was sought, their enmity feared, far and wide throughout the north. They seem to have been, with the instinct of true Flemings, civilisers, and cultivators, and traders, as well as conquerors; they were in those very days bringing to order and tillage the rich lands of the north-east, from the Firth of Moray to that of Forth; and forming a rampart for Scotland against the invasions of Sweyn, Hardraade, and all the wild Vikings of the northern seas.

Amongst them, in those days, Gilbert of Ghent seems to have been a notable personage, to judge from the great house which he kept, and the "milites tyrones," or squires in training for the honour of knighthood, who fed at his table. Where he lived, the chroniclers report not. To them the country "ultra Northumbriam," beyond the Forth, was as Russia or Cathay, where

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> "Geographers on pathless downs
> Put elephants for want of towns."

As indeed it was to that French map-maker who, as late as the middle of the eighteenth century (not having been to Aberdeen or Elgin), leaves all the country north of the Tay a blank, with the inscription:—"*Terre inculte et sauvage, habitée par les Highlanders.*"

Wherever Gilbert lived, however, he heard that Hereward was outlawed, and sent for him, says the story,[1] having, it would seem, some connection with his father. And there he lived, doubtless happily enough, fighting Celts and hunting deer, so that as yet the pains and penalties of exile did not press very hardly upon him. The handsome, petulant, good-humoured lad had become in a few weeks the darling of Gilbert's ladies, and the envy of all his knights and gentlemen. Hereward the singer, harp-player, dancer, Hereward the rider and hunter, was in all mouths: but he himself was discontented at having as yet fallen in with no adventure worthy of a man; and he looked curiously and longingly at the menagerie of wild beasts enclosed in strong wooden cages, which Gilbert kept in one corner of the great courtyard, not for any scientific purposes, but to try with them, at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, the mettle of the

[1] Richard of Ely gives as the reason—"pro illo misit: filiolus enim erat divitis illius." "Filiolus" may be presumed to mean Godson in the vocabulary of that good monk: but it is not clear of whom he speaks as "dives ille." Possibly Gilbert of Ghent was godson of Hereward's father.

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young gentlemen who were candidates for the honour of knighthood. But after looking over the bulls and stags, wolves and bears, Hereward settled it in his mind that there was none worthy of his steel, save one huge white bear, whom no man had yet dared to face, and whom Hereward, indeed, had never seen, hidden as he was all day within the old oven-shaped Pict's house of stone, which had been turned into his den. There was a mystery about the uncanny brute which charmed Hereward. He was said to be half-human, perhaps wholly human; to be a son of the Fairy Bear, near kinsman, if not brother, uncle, or cousin, of Siward Digre himself. He had, like his fairy father, iron claws; he had human intellect, and understood human speech, and the arts of war,—at least so all in the place believed, and not as absurdly as at first sight seems.

For the brown bear, and much more the white, was, among the Northern nations, in himself a creature magical and superhuman. "He is God's dog," whispered the Lapp, and called him "the old man in the fur cloak," afraid to use his right name, even inside the tent, for fear of his overhearing and avenging the insult. "He has twelve men's strength, and eleven men's wit," sang the Norseman, and prided himself accordingly, like a true Norseman, on outwitting and slaying the enchanted monster.

Terrible was the brown bear: but more terrible "the white sea-deer," as the Saxons called him; the hound of Hrymir, the whale's bane, the seal's dread,

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the rider of the iceberg, the sailer of the floe, who ranged for his prey under the six months' night, lighted by Surtur's fires, even to the gates of Muspelheim. To slay him was a feat worthy of Beowulf's self; and the greatest wonder, perhaps, among all the wealth of Crowland, was the twelve white bear-skins which lay before the altars, the gift of the great Canute. How Gilbert had obtained his white bear, and why he kept him there in durance vile, was a mystery over which men shook their heads. Again and again Hereward asked his host to let him try his strength against the monster of the North. Again and again the shrieks of the ladies, and Gilbert's own pity for the stripling youth, brought a refusal. But Hereward settled it in his heart, nevertheless, that somehow or other, when Christmas time came round, he would extract from Gilbert, drunk or sober, leave to fight that bear; and then either make himself a name, or die like a man.

Meanwhile Hereward made a friend. Among all the ladies of Gilbert's household, however kind they were inclined to be to him, he took a fancy only to one—a little girl of ten years old. Alftruda was her name. He liked to amuse himself with this child, without, as he fancied, any danger of falling in love; for already his dreams of love were of the highest and most fantastic; and an Emir's daughter, or a Princess of Constantinople, were the very lowest game at which he meant to fly. Alftruda was beautiful, too, exceedingly, and precocious, and, it may be, vain

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enough to repay his attentions in good earnest. Moreover she was English, as he was, and royal likewise; a relation of Elfgiva, daughter of Ethelred, once King of England. She, as all know, married Uchtred prince of Northumberland, the grandfather of Gospatrick, Earl of Northumberland, and ancestor of all the Dunbars.[1] Between the English lad then and the English maiden grew up in a few weeks an innocent friendship, which had almost become more than friendship, through the intervention of the Fairy Bear.

For as Hereward was coming in one afternoon from hunting, hawk on fist, with Martin Lightfoot trotting behind, crane and heron, duck and hare, slung over his shoulder, on reaching the courtyard gates he was aware of screams and shouts within, tumult and terror among man and beast. Hereward tried to force his horse in at the gate. The beast stopped and turned, snorting with fear; and no wonder; for in the midst of the courtyard stood the Fairy Bear; his white mane bristled up till he seemed twice as big as any of the sober brown bears which Hereward yet had seen: his long snake neck and cruel visage wreathing about in search of prey. A dead horse, its back broken by a single blow of the paw, and two or three writhing dogs, showed that the beast had turned (like too many of his human kindred in those days) "Berserker." The courtyard was utterly empty: but from the ladies' bower came shrieks and shouts, not only of women but of men; and knocking at the

[1] See note at end of chapter.

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bower door, adding her screams to those inside, was a little white figure, which Hereward recognised as Alftruda's. They had barricaded themselves inside, leaving the child out; and now dared not open the door, as the bear swung and rolled towards it, looking savagely right and left for a fresh victim.

Hereward leaped from his horse, and, drawing his sword, rushed forward with a shout which made the bear turn round.

He looked once back at the child; then round again at Hereward: and, making up his mind to take the largest morsel first, made straight at him with a growl which there was no mistaking.

He was within two paces; then he rose on his hind legs, a head and shoulders taller than Hereward, and lifted the iron talons high in air. Hereward knew that there was but one spot at which to strike; and he struck true and strong, before the iron paw could fall, right on the muzzle of the monster.

He heard the dull crash of the steel; he felt the sword jammed tight. He shut his eyes for an instant, fearing lest, as in dreams, his blow had come to nought; lest his sword had turned aside, or melted like water in his hand, and the next moment would find him crushed to earth, blinded and stunned. Something tugged at his sword. He opened his eyes, and saw the huge carcase bend, reel, roll slowly over to one side, dead, tearing out of his hand the sword which was firmly fixed into the skull.

Hereward stood awhile staring at the beast like a

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man astonied at what he himself had done. He had had his first adventure, and he had conquered. He was now a champion in his own right—a hero of the heroes—one who might take rank, if he went on, beside Beowulf, Frotho, Ragnar Lodbrog, or Harald Hardraade. He had done this deed. What was there after this which he might not do? And he stood there in the fulness of his pride, defiant of earth and heaven, while in his heart arose the thought of that old Viking who cried, in the pride of his godlessness, "I never on earth met him whom I feared, and why should I fear him in heaven? If I met Odin I would fight with Odin. If Odin were the stronger he would slay me: if I were the stronger I would slay him." There he stood, staring, and dreaming over renown to come, a true pattern of the half-savage hero of those rough times, capable of all vices except cowardice, and capable, too, of all virtues save humility.

"Do you not see," said Martin Lightfoot's voice close by, "that there is a fair lady trying to thank you, while you are so rude or so proud that you will not vouchsafe her one look?"

It was true. Little Alftruda had been clinging to him for five minutes past. He took the child up in his arms and kissed her with pure kisses, which for a moment softened his hard heart; then, setting her down, he turned to Martin.

"I have done it, Martin."

"Yes, you have done it; I spied you. What will the old folks at home say to this?"

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"What care I?"

Martin Lightfoot shook his head, and drew out his knife.

"What is that for?" said Hereward.

"When the master kills the game, the knave can but skin it. We may sleep warm under this fur in many a cold night by sea and moor."

"Nay," said Hereward, laughing; "when the master kills the game he must first carry it home. Let us take him and set him up against the bower door there, to astonish the brave knights inside." And stooping down, he attempted to lift the huge carcase: but in vain. At last, with Martin's help, he got it fairly on his shoulders, and the two dragged their burden to the bower, and dashed it against the door, shouting with all their might to those within to open it.

Windows, it must be remembered, were in those days so few and far between, that the folks inside had remained quite unaware of what was going on without.

The door was opened cautiously enough; and out looked, to the shame of knighthood be it said, two or three knights who had taken shelter in the bower with the ladies. Whatever they were going to say the ladies forestalled, for, rushing out across the prostrate bear, they overwhelmed Hereward with praises, thanks, and, after the straightforward custom of those days, with substantial kisses.

"You must be knighted at once," cried they. "You have knighted yourself by that single blow."

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"A pity then," said one of the knights to the others, "that he had not given that accolade to himself, instead of to the bear."

"Unless some means are found," said another, "of taking down this boy's conceit, life will soon be not worth having here."

"Either he must take ship," said a third, "and look for adventures elsewhere, or I must."

Martin Lightfoot heard those words; and knowing that envy and hatred, like all other vices in those rough-hewn times, were apt to take very startling and unmistakable shapes, kept his eye accordingly on those three knights.

"He must be knighted—he shall be knighted, as soon as Sir Gilbert comes home," said all the ladies in chorus.

"I should be sorry to think," said Hereward, with the blundering mock humility of a self-conceited boy, "that I had done anything worthy of such an honour. I hope to win my spurs by greater feats than these."

A burst of laughter from the knights and gentlemen followed.

"How loud the young cockerel crows after his first scuffle!"

"Hark to him! What will he do next? Eat a dragon? Fly to the moon? Marry the Sophy of Egypt's daughter?"

This last touched Hereward to the quick, for it was just what he thought of doing; and his blood, heated

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enough already, beat quicker, as some one cried, with the evident intent of picking a quarrel:

"That was meant for us. If the man who killed the bear has not deserved knighthood, what must we have deserved, who have not killed him? You understand his meaning, gentlemen—do not forget it!"

Hereward looked down, and setting his foot on the bear's head, wrenched out of it the sword, which he had left till now, with pardonable pride, fast set in the skull.

Martin Lightfoot, for his part, drew stealthily from his bosom the little magic axe, keeping his eye on the brain-pan of the last speaker.

The lady of the house cried "Shame!" and ordered the knights away with haughty words and gestures, which, because they were so well deserved, only made the quarrel more deadly.

Then she commanded Hereward to sheathe his sword.

He did so; and, turning to the knights, said with all courtesy, "You mistake me, sirs. You were where brave knights should be, within the beleaguered fortress, defending the ladies. Had you remained outside, and been eaten by the bear, what must have befallen them, had he burst open the door? As for this little lass, whom you left outside, she is too young to requite knight's prowess by lady's love; and therefore beneath your attention, and only fit for the care of a boy like me." And taking up Alftruda in his arms, he carried her in and disappeared.

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Who now but Hereward was in all men's mouths? The minstrels made ballads on him; the lasses sang his praises (says the chronicler) as they danced upon the green. Gilbert's lady would need give him the seat, and all the honours, of a belted knight, though knight he was none. And daily and weekly the valiant lad grew and hardened into a valiant man, and a courteous one withal, giving no offence himself, and not over ready to take offence at other men.

The knights were civil enough to him, the ladies more than civil; he hunted, he wrestled, he tilted; he was promised a chance of fighting for glory, as soon as a Highland chief should declare war against Gilbert, or drive off his cattle—an event which (and small blame to the Highland chiefs) happened every six months.

No one was so well content with himself as Hereward; and therefore he fancied that the world must be equally content with him; and he was much disconcerted when Martin drew him aside one day, and whispered:

"If I were my lord, I should wear a mail shirt under my coat to-morrow out hunting."

"What?"

"The arrow that can go through a deer's bladebone can go through a man's."

"Who should harm me?"

"Any man of the dozen who eat at the same table."

"What have I done to them? If I had my laugh

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at them, they had their laugh at me; and we are quits."

"There is another score, my lord, which you have forgotten, and that is all on your side."

"Eh?"

"You killed the bear. Do you expect them to forgive you that, till they have repaid you with interest?"

"Pish!"

"You do not want for wit, my lord. Use it, and think. What right has a little boy like you to come here, killing bears which grown men cannot kill? What can you expect but just punishment for your insolence—say, a lance between your shoulders while you stoop to drink, as Sigfried had for daring to tame Brunhild? And more, what right have you to come here, and so win the hearts of the ladies, that the lady of all the ladies should say, 'If aught happen to my poor boy—and he cannot live long—I would adopt Hereward for my own son, and show his mother what a fool some folks think her.' 'So, my lord, put on your mail shirt to-morrow, and take care of narrow ways, and sharp corners. For to-morrow it will be tried, that I know, before my Lord Gilbert comes back from the Highlands: but by whom, I know not, and care little, seeing that there are half-a-dozen in the house who would be glad enough of the chance."

Hereward took his advice, and rode out with three or four knights the next morning into the fir-forest;

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not afraid, but angry and sad. He was not yet old enough to estimate the virulence of envy; to take ingratitude and treachery for granted. He was to learn the lesson then, as a wholesome chastener to the pride of success. He was to learn it again in later years, as an additional bitterness in the humiliation of defeat; and find out that if a man once fall, or seem to fall, a hundred curs spring up to bark at him, who dared not open their mouths while he was on his legs.

So they rode into the forest, and parted, each with his footman and his dogs, in search of boar and deer; and each had his sport without meeting again for some two hours or more.

Hereward and Martin came at last to a narrow gully, a murderous place enough. Huge fir-trees roofed it in, and made a night of noon. High banks of earth and great boulders walled it in right and left for twenty feet above. The track, what with pack-horses' feet, and what with the wear and tear of five hundred years' rainfall, was a rut three feet deep and two feet broad, in which no horse could turn. Any other day Hereward would have cantered down it with merely a tightened rein. To-day he turned to Martin, and said—

"A very fit and proper place for this same treason: unless thou hast been drinking beer and thinking beer."

But Martin was nowhere to be seen.

A pebble thrown from the right bank struck him,

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and he looked up. Martin's face was peering through the heather overhead, his finger on his lips. Then he pointed cautiously, first up the pass, then down.

Hereward felt that his sword was loose in the sheath, and then griped his lance, with a heart beating, but not with fear.

The next moment he heard the rattle of a horse's hoofs behind him; looked back; and saw a knight charging desperately down the gully, his bow in hand, and arrow drawn to the head.

To turn was impossible. To stop, even to walk on, was to be ridden over and hurled to the ground helplessly. To gain the mouth of the gully, and then turn on his pursuer, was his only chance. For the first and almost the last time in his life, he struck spurs into his horse, and ran away. As he went, an arrow struck him sharply in the back, piercing the corselet, but hardly entering the flesh. As he neared the mouth, two other knights crashed their horses through the brushwood from right and left, and stood awaiting him, their spears ready to strike. He was caught in a trap. A shield might have saved him; but he had none.

He did not flinch. Dropping his reins, and driving in the spurs once more, he met them in full shock. With his left hand he thrust aside the left-hand lance, with his right he hurled his own with all his force at the right-hand foe, and saw it pass clean through the felon's chest, while his lance-point dropped, and passed harmlessly.

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So much for lances in front. But the knight behind? Would not his sword the next moment be through his brain?

There was a clatter, a crash, and looking back, Hereward saw horse and man rolling in the rut, and rolling with them Martin Lightfoot. He had already pinned the knight's head against the steep bank, and, with uplifted axe, was meditating a pick at his face which would have stopped alike his love-making and his fighting.

"Hold thy hand," shouted Hereward. "Let us see who he is; and remember that he is at least a knight."

"But one that will ride no more to-day. I finished his horse's going as I rolled down the bank."

It was true. He had broken the poor beast's leg with a blow of the axe, and they had to kill the horse out of pity ere they left.

Martin dragged his prisoner forward.

"You?" cried Hereward. "And I saved your life three days ago!"

The knight answered nothing.

"You will have to walk home. Let that be punishment enough for you." And he turned.

"He will have to ride in a woodman's cart, if he have the luck to find one."

The third knight had fled, and after him the dead man's horse. Hereward and his man rode home in peace, and the wounded man, after trying vainly to walk a mile or two, fell and lay, and was fain to fulfil

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Martin's prophecy, and be brought home in a cart, to carry for years after, like Sir Lancelot, the nickname of the Chevalier de la Charette.

And so was Hereward avenged of his enemies; and began to win for himself the famous soubriquet of "Wake;" the Watcher, whom no man ever took unawares. Judicial, even private, inquiry into the matter, there was none. That gentlemen should meet in the forest, try to commit murder on each other's bodies, was rather too common a mishap to stir up more than an extra gossiping among the women, and an extra cursing among the men; and as the former were all on Hereward's side, his plain story was taken as it stood.

"And now, fair lady," said Hereward to his hostess, "I must thank you for your hospitality, and bid you farewell for ever and a day."

She wept, and entreated him only to stay till her lord came back: but Hereward was firm.

"You, lady, and your good lord will I ever love; and at your service my sword shall ever be: but not here. Ill blood I will not make. Among traitors I will not dwell. I have killed two of them, and shall have to kill two of their kinsmen next, and then two more, till you have no knights left; and pity that would be. No; the world is wide, and there are plenty of good fellows in it who will welcome me without forcing me to wear mail under my coat out hunting."

And he armed himself *cap-à-pié*, and rode away.

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Great was the weeping in the bower, and great the chuckling in the hall: but never saw they Hereward again upon the Scottish shore.

NOTE.

I insert on the following page the pedigree of Gospatric and the Dunbars, with many thanks to the gallant Dunbar to whom I owe the greater part thereof. It illustrates that connection between the royal houses of Scotland and of England which influenced so much the course of the Norman Conquest. The singular name Gospatric, or Cospatric, is, it should be remembered, remarkable, as perhaps the earliest instance of an hereditary name. I am sorry to say that Scottish antiquaries can as yet throw no light on its etymology.

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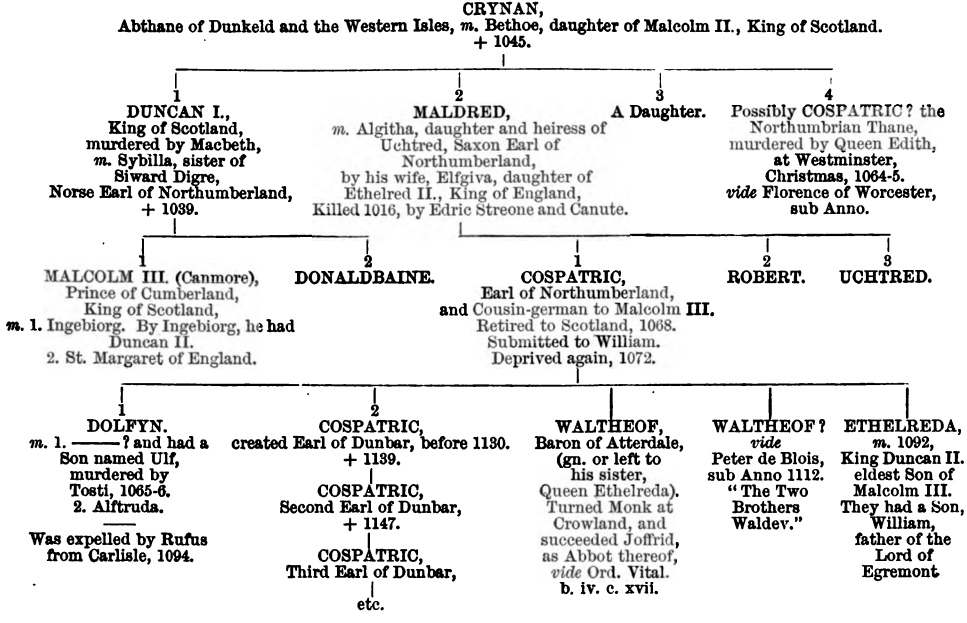

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CHAPTER III.

HOW HEREWARD SUCCOURED A PRINCESS OF CORNWALL.

THE next place in which Hereward appeared was far away on the South-West, upon the Cornish shore. He went into port on board a merchant ship carrying wine, and intending to bring back tin. The merchants had told him of one "Alef,"[1] a valiant "regulus," or kinglet, living at Gweek, up the Helford river, who was indeed a distant connection of Hereward himself, having married, as did so many of the Celtic princes, the daughter of a Danish sea rover of Siward's blood. They told him also that the kinglet increased his wealth, not only by the sale of tin and of red cattle, but by a certain amount of "Summerleding" (*i.e.* piracy between seed-time and harvest) in company with his Danish brothers-in-law from Dublin and Waterford; and Hereward, who believed with most Englishmen of the East Country, that Cornwall still produced a fair crop of giants, some of them with two and even three heads, had hopes that Alef might

[1] Probably a corruption of the Norse name Olaf. There is much Norse blood in the seaports of Cornwall and Devon, as the surnames testify.

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show him some adventure worthy of his sword. He sailed in, therefore, over a rolling bar, between jagged points of black rock, and up a tide river which wandered and branched away inland like a landlocked lake, between high green walls of oak and ash, till they saw at the head of the tide Alef's town, nestling in a glen which sloped towards the southern sun. They discovered, besides, two ships drawn up upon the beach, whose long lines and snake-heads, beside the stoat carved on the beak-head of one, and the adder on that of the other, bore witness to the piratical habits of their owner. The merchants, it seemed, were well known to the Cornishmen on shore, and Hereward went up with them unopposed; past the ugly dykes and muddy leats, where Alef's slaves were streaming the gravel for tin ore; through rich alluvial pastures spotted with red cattle; and up to Alef's town. Earthworks and stockades surrounded a little church of ancient stone, and a cluster of granite cabins thatched with turf, in which the slaves abode. In the centre of all a vast stone barn, with low walls and high sloping roof, contained Alef's family, treasures, housecarles, horses, cattle, and pigs. They entered at one end between the pigstyes, passed on through the cow-stalls, then through the stables; till they saw before them, dim through the reek of peat-smoke, a long oaken table, at which sat huge dark-haired Cornishmen, with here and there among them the yellow head of a Norseman, who were Alef's following of fighting men. Boiled meat was there in plenty;

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barley cakes and ale. At the head of the table, on a high-backed settle, was Alef himself, a jolly giant, who was just setting to work to drink himself stupid with mead made from narcotic heather honey. By his side sat a lovely dark-haired girl, with great gold torks upon her throat and wrists, and a great gold brooch fastening a shawl which had plainly come from the looms of Spain or of the East; and next to her again, feeding her with tit-bits cut off with his own dagger, and laid on barley cake instead of a plate, sat a more gigantic personage even than Alef, the biggest man that Hereward had ever seen, with high cheek bones and small ferret eyes, looking out from a greasy mass of bright red hair and beard.

No questions were asked of the new-comers. They set themselves down in silence in empty places, and according to the laws of the good old Cornish hospitality, were allowed to eat and drink their fill before they spoke a word.

"Welcome here again, friend," said Alef at last, in good enough Danish, calling the eldest merchant by name. "Do you bring wine?"

The merchant nodded.

"And you want tin?"

The merchant nodded again, and lifting his cup drank Alef's health, following it up by a coarse joke in Cornish, which raised a laugh all round.

The Norse trader of those days, it must be remembered, was none of the cringing and effeminate chapmen who figure in the stories of the middle ages. A

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free Norse or Dane, himself often of noble blood, he fought as willingly as he bought; and held his own as an equal, whether at the court of a Cornish kinglet, or at that of the great Kaiser of the Greeks.

"And you, fair sir," said Alef, looking keenly at Hereward, "by what name shall I call you, and what service can I do for you? You look more like an Earl's son than a merchant, and are come here surely for other things besides tin."

"Health to King Alef," said Hereward, raising the cup. "Who I am I will tell to none but Alef's self: but an Earl's son I am, though an outlaw and a rover. My lands are the breadth of my boot sole. My plough is my sword. My treasure is my good right hand. Nothing I have, and nothing I need, save to serve noble kings and earls, and win me a champion's fame. If you have battles to fight, tell me; that I may fight them for you. If you have none, thank God for his peace; and let me eat and drink and go in peace."

"King Alef needs neither man nor boy to fight his battle as long as Ironhook[1] sits in his hall."

It was the red-bearded giant, who spoke in a broken tongue, part Scotch, part Cornish, part Danish, which Hereward could hardly understand: but that the ogre intended to insult him he understood well enough.

[1] "Ulcus Ferreus," says Richard of Ely; surely a misreading for uncus. The hook was a not uncommon weapon among seamen.

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Hereward had hoped to find giants in Cornwall; and behold he had found one at once; though rather, to judge from his looks, a Pictish than a Cornish giant; and true to his reckless determination to defy and fight every man and beast who was willing to defy and fight him, he turned on his elbow and stared at Ironhook in scorn, meditating some speech, which might provoke the hoped-for quarrel.

As he did so his eye happily caught that of the fair Princess. She was watching him with a strange look, admiring, warning, imploring; and when she saw that he noticed her, she laid her finger on her lip in token of silence, crossed herself devoutly, and then laid her finger on her lips again, as if beseeching him to be patient and silent in the name of the Heavenly powers.

Hereward, as is well seen, wanted not for quick wit or for chivalrous feeling. He had observed the rough devotion of the giant to the Lady. He had observed, too, that she shrank from it; that she turned away with loathing when he offered her his own cup, while he answered by a dark and deadly scowl.

Was there an adventure here? Was she in duresse either from this Ironhook, or from her father, or from both? Did she need Hereward's help? If so, she was so lovely that he could not refuse it. And on the chance, he swallowed down his high stomach, and answered blandly enough:

"One could see without eyes, noble sir, that you

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were worth any ten common men: but as every one has not like you the luck of so lovely a lady by your side, I thought that perchance you might hand over some of your lesser quarrels to one like me, who has not yet seen so much good fighting as yourself, and enjoy yourself in pleasant company at home, as I should surely do in your place."

The Princess shuddered and turned pale; then looked at Hereward and smiled her thanks. Ironhook laughed a savage laugh.

Hereward's jest being translated into Cornish for the benefit of the company, was highly approved by all; and good-humour being restored, every man got drunk save Hereward, who found the mead too sweet and sickening.

After which those who could go to bed, went to bed, not as in England,[1] among the rushes on the floor, but in the bunks or berths of wattle which stood two or three tiers high along the wall.

The next morning, as Hereward went out to wash his face and hands in the brook below (he being the only man in the house who did so), Martin Lightfoot followed him.

"What is it, Martin? Hast thou had too much of that sweet mead last night that thou must come out to cool thy head too?"

"I came out for two reasons—first to see fair play, in case that Ironhook should come to wash his ugly visage, and find you on all fours over the brook—you

[1] Cornwall was not then considered part of England.

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understand? And next to tell you what I heard last night among the maids."

"And what didst thou hear?"

"Fine adventures, if we can but compass them. You saw that lady with the carrot-headed fellow? I saw that you saw. Well, if you will believe me, that man has no more gentle blood than I have. He is a No-man's son, a Pict from Galloway, who came down with a pirate crew, and has made himself the master of this drunken old Prince, and the darling of all his housecarles, and now will needs be his son-in-law whether he will or not."

"I thought as much," said Hereward; "but how didst thou find out this?"

"I went out and sat with the knaves and the maids, and listened to their harp-playing (and harp they can, these Cornish, like very elves); and then I too sang songs and told them stories, for I can talk their tongue somewhat, till they all blest me for a right good fellow. And then I fell to praising up Ironhook to the women."

"Praising him up, man?"

"Ay, just because I suspected him; for the women are so contrary that if you speak evil of a man they will surely speak good of him; but if you will only speak good of him, then you will hear all the evil of him he ever has done, and more beside. And this I heard; that the King's daughter cannot abide him, and would as lief marry a seal."

"One did not need to be told that," said Hereward,

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"as long as one has eyes in one's head. I will kill the fellow and carry her off, ere four-and-twenty hours be past."

"Softly, softly, my young master. You need to be told something that your eyes would not tell you, and that is that the poor lass is betrothed already to a son of old King Ranald the Ostman, of Waterford, son of old King Sigtryg, who ruled there when I was a boy."

"He is a kinsman of mine then," said Hereward. "All the more reason that I should kill this ruffian."

"If you can," said Martin Lightfoot.

"If I can?" retorted Hereward fiercely.

"Well, well, wilful heart must have its way, only take my counsel; speak to the poor young lady first, and see what she will tell you, lest you only make bad worse, and bring down her father and his men on her as well as you."

Hereward agreed, and resolved to watch his opportunity of speaking to the princess.

As they went in to the morning meal they met Alef. He was in high good humour with Hereward; and all the more so when Hereward told him his name, and how he was the son of Leofric.

"I will warrant you are," he said, "by the grey head you carry on green shoulders. No discreeter man, they say, in these isles than the old earl."

"You speak truth, sir," said Hereward, "though he be no father of mine now, for of Leofric it is said in King Edward's court, that if a man ask counsel of

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him, it is as though he had asked it of the oracles of God."

"Then you are his true son, young man. I saw how you kept the peace with Ironhook, and I owe you thanks for it; for though he is my good friend, and will be my son-in-law ere long, yet a quarrel with him is more than I can abide just now, and I should not like to have seen my guest and my kinsman slain in my house."

Hereward would have said that he thought there was no fear of that;—but he prudently held his tongue, and having an end to gain, listened instead of talking

"Twenty years ago, of course, I could have thrashed him as easily as——but now I am getting old and shaky, and the man has been a great help in need; six kings of these parts has he killed for me, who drove off my cattle, and stopped my tin-works, and plundered my monks' cells too, which is worse, while I was away sailing the seas; and he is a right good fellow at heart, though he be a little rough. So be friends with him as long as you stay here, and if I can do you a service I will."

They went in to their morning meal, at which Hereward resolved to keep the peace which he longed to break, and, therefore, as was to be expected, broke.

For during the meal the fair lady, with no worse intention perhaps than that of teasing her tyrant, fell to open praises of Hereward's fair face and golden hair, and being insulted therefor by the Ironhook,

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retaliated by observations about his personal appearance, which were more common in the eleventh century than they happily are now. He, to comfort himself, drank deep of the French wine which had just been bought and broached, and then went out into the courtyard, where in the midst of his admiring fellow ruffians he enacted a scene as ludicrous as it was pitiable. All the childish vanity of the savage boiled over. He strutted, he shouted, he tossed about his huge limbs, he called for a harper, and challenged all around to dance, sing, leap, fight, do anything against him; meeting with nothing but admiring silence, he danced himself out of breath, and then began boasting once more, of his fights, his cruelties, his butcheries, his impossible escapes and victories; till at last, as luck would have it, he espied Hereward, and poured out a stream of abuse against Englishmen and English courage.

"Englishmen," he said, "were nought. Had he not slain three of them himself with one blow?"

"Of your mouth, I suppose," quoth Hereward, who saw that the quarrel must come, and was glad to have it done and over.

"Of my mouth?" roared Ironhook, "of my sword, man!"

"Of your mouth," said Hereward. "Of your brain were they begotten, of the breath of your mouth they were born, and by the breath of your mouth you can slay them again as often as you choose."

The joke, as it has been handed down to us by the

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old chroniclers, seems clumsy enough: but it sent the princess, say they, into shrieks of laughter.

"Were it not that my lord Alef was here," shouted Ironhook, "I would kill you out of hand."

"Promise to fight fair, and do your worst. The more fairly you fight, the more honour you will win," said Hereward.

Whereupon the two were parted for the while.

Two hours afterwards Hereward, completely armed with helmet and mail-shirt, sword and javelin, hurried across the great courtyard with Martin Lightfoot at his heels, towards the little church upon the knoll above. The two wild men entered into the cool darkness and saw before them by the light of a tiny lamp the crucifix over the altar, and beneath it that which was then believed to be the body of Him who made heaven and earth. They stopped, trembling for a moment; bowed themselves before that to them perpetual miracle; and then hurried on to a low doorway to the right, inside which dwelt Alef's chaplain, one of those good Celtic priests who were supposed to represent a Christianity more ancient than, and all but independent of, the then all-absorbing Church of Rome.

The cell was such a one as a convict would now disdain to inhabit. A low lean-to roof; the slates and rafters unceiled; the stone walls and floor unplastered; ill lighted by a hand-broad window, unglazed, and closed with a shutter at night. A truss of straw and a rug, the priest's bed, lay in a corner. The only

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other furniture was a large oak chest, containing the holy vessels and vestments and a few old books. It stood directly under the window for the sake of light, for it served the good priest for both table and chair; and on it he was sitting reading in his book at that minute, the sunshine and the wind streaming in behind his head, doing no good to his rheumatism of thirty years' standing.

"Is there a priest here?" asked Hereward, hurriedly.

The old man looked up, shook his head, and answered in Cornish.

"Speak to him in Latin, Martin; may be he will understand that."

Martin spoke. "My lord here wants a priest to shrive him, and that quickly. He is going to fight the great tyrant Ironhook, as you call him."

"Ironhook?" answered the priest in good Latin enough, "And he so young! God help him, he is a dead man. What is this? A fresh soul sent to its account by the hands of that man of Belial? Cannot he entreat him; can he not make peace, and save his young life? He is but a stripling, and that man, like Goliath of old, a man of war from his youth up."

"And my master," said Martin Lightfoot proudly, "is like young David—one that can face a giant and kill him; for he has slain, like David, his lion and his bear ere now. At least, he is one that will neither make peace, nor entreat the face of living man. So

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shrive him quickly, master Priest, and let him be gone to his work."

Poor Martin Lightfoot spoke thus bravely only to keep up his spirits and his young lord's—for in spite of his confidence in Hereward's prowess, he had given him up for a lost man; and the tears ran down his rugged cheeks, as the old priest rising up and seizing Hereward's two hands in his, besought him, with the passionate and graceful eloquence of his race, to have mercy upon his own youth.

Hereward understood his meaning, though not his words.

"Tell him," he said to Martin, "that fight I must, and tell him that shrive me he must and that quickly. Tell him how the fellow met me in the wood below just now, and would have slain me there unarmed as I was; and how, when I told him it was a shame to strike a naked man, he told me he would give me but one hour's grace to go back, on the faith of a gentleman, for my armour and weapons, and meet him there again to die by his hand.—So shrive me quick, Sir Priest."

Hereward knelt down. Martin Lightfoot knelt down by him, and with a trembling voice began to interpret for him.

"What does he say?" asked Hereward, as the priest murmured something to himself.

"He said," quoth Martin, now fairly blubbering, "that fair and young as you are, your shrift should be as short and as clean as David's."

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Hereward was touched. "Anything but that," said he smiting on his breast, "Mea culpa—mea culpa—mea maxima culpa."

"Tell him how I robbed my father."

The priest groaned as Martin did so.

"And how I mocked at my mother, and left her in a rage, without ever a kind word between us. And how I have slain I know not how many men in battle, though that, I trust, need not lie heavily on my soul, seeing that I killed them all in fair fight."

Again the priest groaned.

"And how I robbed a certain priest of his money, and gave it away to my housecarles."

Here the priest groaned more bitterly still.

"Oh! my son, my son, where hast thou found time to lay all these burdens on thy young soul?"

"It will take less time," said Martin bluntly, "for you to take the burdens off again."

"But I dare not absolve him for robbing a priest. Heaven help him! He must go to the bishop for that. He is more fit to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem than to battle."

"He has no time," quoth Martin, "for bishops or Jerusalem."

"Tell him," says Hereward, "that in this purse is all I have, that in it he will find sixty silver pennies, beside two strange coins of gold."

"Sir Priest," said Martin Lightfoot, taking the purse from Hereward, and keeping it in his own hand, "there are in this bag monies."

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Martin had no mind to let the priest into the secret of the state of their finances.

"And tell him," continued Hereward, "that if I fall in this battle I give him all that money, that he may part it among the poor for the good of my soul."

"Pish!" said Martin to his lord; "that is paying him for having you killed. You should pay him for keeping you alive." And without waiting for the answer, he spoke in Latin.

"And if he comes back safe from this battle, he will give you ten pennies for yourself and your church, Priest, and therefore expects you to pray your very loudest while he is gone."

"I will pray, I will pray," said the holy man; "I will wrestle in prayer. Ah! that he could slay the wicked, and reward the proud according to his deservings. Ah! that he could rid me and my master, and my young lady, of this son of Belial—this devourer of widows and orphans—this slayer of the poor and needy, who fills this place with innocent blood—him of whom it is written, 'They stretch forth their mouth unto the heaven, and their tongue goeth through the world. Therefore fall the people unto them, and thereout suck they no small advantage.' I will shrive him, shrive him of all save robbing the priest, and for that he must go to the bishop, if he live: and, if not, the Lord have mercy on his soul."

And so, weeping and trembling, the good old man pronounced the words of absolution.

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Hereward rose, thanked him, and then hurried out in silence.

"You will pray your very loudest, Priest," said Martin, as he followed his young lord.

"I will, I will," quoth he, and kneeling down began to chaunt that noble 73d Psalm, "Quam bonus Israel," which he had just so fitly quoted.

"Thou gavest him the bag, Martin?" said Hereward, as they hurried on.

"You are not dead yet. 'No pay no play' is as good a rule for priest as for layman."

"Now then, Martin Lightfoot, good-bye. Come not with me. It must never be said, even slanderously, that I brought two into the field against one; and if I die, Martin——"

"You won't die!" said Lightfoot, shutting his teeth.

"If I die, go back to my people somehow, and tell them that I died like a true earl's son."

Hereward held out his hand; Martin fell on his knees and kissed it; watched him with set teeth till he disappeared in the wood; and then started forward and entered the bushes at a different spot.

"I must be nigh at hand to see fair play," he muttered to himself, "in case any of his ruffians be hanging about. Fair play I'll see, and fair play I'll give, too, for the sake of my lord's honour, though I be bitterly loth to do it. So many times as I have been a villain when it was of no use, why mayn't I be one now, when it would serve the purpose indeed?

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Why did we ever come into this accursed place? But one thing I will do," said he, as he ensconced himself under a thick holly, whence he could see the meeting of the combatants upon an open lawn some twenty yards away; "if that big bull calf kills my master, and I do not jump on his back and pick his brains out with this trusty steel of mine, may my right arm——"

And Martin Lightfoot swore a fearful oath, which need not here be written.

The priest had just finished his chaunt of the 73d Psalm, and had betaken himself in his spiritual warfare, as it was then called, to the equally apposite 52d, "Quid gloriaris?"

"Why boastest thou thyself, thou tyrant, that thou canst do mischief, whereas the goodness of God endureth yet daily?"

"Father! father!" cried a soft voice in the doorway, "where are you?"

And in hurried the princess.

"Hide this," she said, breathless, drawing from beneath her mantle a huge sword; "hide it, where no one dare touch it, under the altar behind the holy rood: no place too secret."

"What is it?" asked the priest, rising from his knees.

"His sword—the ogre's—his magic sword, which kills whomsoever it strikes. I coaxed him to let me have it last night when he was tipsy, for fear he should quarrel with the young stranger; and I have

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kept it from him ever since by one excuse or another; and now he has sent one of his ruffians in for it, saying, that if I do not give it up at once he will come back and kill me."

"He dare not do that," said the priest.

"What is there that he dare not?" said she. "Hide it at once; I know that he wants it to fight with this Hereward."

"If he wants it for that," said the priest, "it is too late; for half an hour is past since Hereward went to meet him."

"And you let him go? You did not persuade him, stop him? You let him go hence to his death?"

In vain the good man expostulated, and explained that it was no fault of his.

"You must come with me this instant to my father—to them; they must be parted. They shall be parted. If you dare not, I dare. I will throw myself between them, and he that strikes the other shall strike me."

And she hurried the priest out of the house, down the knoll, and across the yard. There they found others on the same errand. The news that a battle was toward had soon spread, and the men-at-arms were hurrying down to the fight; kept back, however, by Alef, who strode along at their head.

Alef was sorely perplexed in mind. He had taken, as all honest men did, a great liking to Hereward. Moreover, he was his kinsman and his guest. Save him he would if he could; but how to save him with-

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out mortally offending his tyrant Ironhook he could not see. At least he would exert what little power he had, and prevent, if possible, his men-at-arms from helping their darling leader against the hapless lad.

Alef's perplexity was much increased when his daughter bounded towards him, seized him by the arm, and hurried him on, showing by look and word which of the combatants she favoured, so plainly that the ruffians behind broke into scornful murmurs. They burst through the bushes. Martin Lightfoot happily heard them coming, and had just time to slip away noiselessly, like a rabbit, to the other part of the cover.

The combat seemed at the first glance to be one between a grown man and a child, so unequal was the size of the combatants. But the second look showed that the advantage was by no means with Ironhook. Stumbling to and fro with the broken shaft of a javelin sticking in his thigh, he vainly tried to seize Hereward with his long iron grapple. Hereward, bleeding, but still active and upright, broke away, and sprang round him, watching for an opportunity to strike a deadly blow. The housecarles rushed forward with yells. Alef shouted to the combatants to desist: but ere the party could reach them, Hereward's opportunity had come. Ironhook after a fruitless lunge stumbled forward. Hereward leapt aside, and spying an unguarded spot below the corselet, drove his sword deep into the giant's body, and

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rolled him over upon the sward. Then arose shouts of fury.

"Foul play!" cried one.

And others, taking up the cry, called out "Sorcery!" and "Treason!"

Hereward stood over Ironhook as he lay writhing and foaming on the ground.

"Killed by a boy at last!" groaned he. "If I had but had my sword—my Brain-biter which that witch stole from me but last night!"—and amid foul curses and bitter tears of shame his mortal spirit fled to its doom.

The housecarles rushed in on Hereward, who had enough to do to keep them at arm's length by long sweeps of his sword.

Alef entreated, threatened, promised a fair trial if the men would give fair play: when, to complete the confusion, the princess threw herself upon the corpse, shrieking and tearing her hair; and to Hereward's surprise and disgust, bewailed the prowess and the virtues of the dead, calling upon all present to avenge his murder.

Hereward vowed inwardly that he would never again trust woman's fancy, or fight in woman's quarrel. He was now nigh at his wits' end; the housecarles had closed round him in a ring with the intention of seizing him; and however well he might defend his front, he might be crippled at any moment from behind: but in the very nick of time Martin Lightfoot burst through the crowd, set himself heel to heel with

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his master, and broke out, not with threats, but with a good-humoured laugh.

"Here is a pretty coil about a red-headed brute of a Pict! Danes, Ostmen," he cried, "are you not ashamed to call such a fellow your lord, when you have such a true earl's son as this to lead you if you will?"

The Ostmen in the company looked at each other. Martin Lightfoot saw that his appeal to the antipathies of race had told. He, therefore, followed it up by a string of witticisms upon the Pictish nation in general, of which the only two fit for modern ears to be set down were the two old stories, that the Picts had feet so large that they used to lie upon their backs and hold up their legs to shelter themselves from the sun; and that when killed, they could not fall down, but died as they were, all standing.

"So that the only foul play I can see is that my master shoved the fellow over after he had stabbed him, instead of leaving him to stand upright there, like one of your Cornish Dolmens, till his flesh should fall off his bones."

Hereward saw the effect of Martin's words; and burst out in Danish likewise, with a true Viking chaunt—

"Look at me, dread me!
I am the Hereward,[1]
The watcher, the champion,
The Berserker, the Viking,
The land-thief, the sea-thief,

[1] "Guardian of the Army."

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Young summer pirate,
Famous land-waster,
Slayer of witch-bears,
Queller of Ogres,
Fattener of ravens,
Darling of grey wolves,
Wild widow-maker.
Touch me—to wolf and
Raven I give you.
Ship with me boldly,
Follow me gaily,
Over the swan's road,
Over the whale's bath,
Far to the southward,
Where sun and sea meet;
Where from the palm-boughs
Apples of gold hang;
And freight there our long snake
With sendal and orfray,
Dark Moorish maidens,
And gold of Algier."

"Hark to the Viking! Hark to the right earl's son!" shouted some of the Danes, whose blood had been stirred many a time before by such wild words, and on whom Hereward's youth and beauty had their due effect. And now the counsels of the ruffians being divided, the old priest gained courage to step in. Let them deliver Hereward and his serving man into his custody. He would bring them forth on the morrow, and there should be full investigation and fair trial. And so Hereward and Martin, who both refused stoutly to give up their arms, were marched back into the town, locked in the little church, and left to their meditations.

Hereward sat down on the pavement and cursed

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the princess. Martin Lightfoot took off his master's corselet, and, as well as the darkness would allow, bound up his wounds, which happily were not severe.

"Were I you," said he at last, "I should keep my curses till I saw the end of this adventure."

"Has not the girl betrayed me shamefully?"

"Not she. I saw her warn you, as far as looks could do, not to quarrel with the man."

"That was because she did not know me. Little she thought that I could——"

"Don't holla till you are out of the wood. This is a night for praying rather than boasting."

"She cannot really love that wretch," said Hereward, after a pause. "Thou saw'st how she mocked him."

"Women are strange things, and often tease most where they love most."

"But such a misbegotten savage."

"Women are strange things, say I, and with some a big fellow is a pretty fellow, be he uglier than seven Ironhooks. Still, just because women are strange things, have patience, say I."

The lock creaked, and the old priest came in. Martin leapt to the open door; but it was slammed in his face by men outside with scornful laughter.

The priest took Hereward's head in his hands, wept over him, blest him for having slain Goliath like young David, and then set food and drink before the two; but he answered Martin's questions only with sighs and shakings of the head.

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"Let us eat and drink then," said Martin, "and after that you, my lord, sleep off your wounds while I watch the door. I have no fancy for these fellows taking us unawares at night."

Martin lay quietly across the door till the small hours, listening to every sound, till the key creaked once more in the lock. He started at the sound; and seizing the person who entered round the neck, whispered, "One word, and you are dead."

"Do not hurt me," answered a stifled voice; and Martin Lightfoot, to his surprise, found that he had grasped no armed man, but the slight frame of a young girl.

"I am the Princess," she whispered, "let me in."

"A very pretty hostage for us," thought Martin, and letting her go seized the key, locking the door in the inside.

"Take me to your master," she cried, and Martin led her up the church wondering, but half suspecting some further trap.

"You have a dagger in your hand," said he, holding her wrist.

"I have. If I had meant to use it, it would have been used first on you. Take it, if you like."

She hurried up to Hereward, who lay sleeping quietly on the altar-steps; knelt by him, wrung his hands, called him her champion, her deliverer.

"I am not well awake yet," said he coldly, "and do not know whether this may not be a dream, as more that I have seen and heard seems to be."

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"It is no dream. I am true. I was always true to you. Have I not put myself in your power? Am I not come here to deliver you, my deliverer?"

"The tears which you shed over your ogre's corpse seem to have dried quickly enough."

"Cruel! What else could I do? You heard him accuse me to his rough followers of having stolen his sword. My life, my father's life, were not safe a moment, had I not dissembled, and done the thing I loathed. Ah!" she went on bitterly. "You men, who rule the world and us by cruel steel, you forget that we poor women have but one weapon left wherewith to hold our own, and that is cunning; and are driven by you day after day to tell the lie which we detest."

"Then you really stole his sword?"

"And hid it here, for your sake." And she drew the weapon from behind the altar.

"Take it. It is yours now. It is magical. Whoever smites with it, need never smite again. Now, quick, you must be gone. But promise one thing before you go."

"If I leave this land safe I will do it, be it what it may. Why not come with me, lady, and see it done?"

She laughed. "Vain boy, do you think that I love you well enough for that?"

"I have won you, and why should I not keep you?" said Hereward sullenly.

"Do you not know that I am betrothed to your

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kinsman? And—though that you cannot know—that I love your kinsman?"

"So I have all the blows, and none of the spoil."

"Tush, you have the glory—and the sword—and the chance, if you will do my bidding, of being called by all ladies a true and gentle knight, who cared not for his own pleasure, but for deeds of chivalry. Go to my betrothed—to Waterford over the sea. Take him this ring, and tell him by that token to come and claim me soon, lest he run the danger of losing me a second time, and lose me then for ever; for I am in hard case here, and were it not for my father's sake, perhaps I might dare, in spite of what men might say, to flee with you to your kinsman across the sea."

"Trust me and come," said Hereward, whose young blood kindled with a sudden nobleness.—"Trust me and I will treat you like my sister, like my queen. By the holy rood above I will swear to be true to you."

"I do trust you, but it cannot be. Here is money for you in plenty to hire a passage if you need: it is no shame to take it from me. And now one thing more. Here is a cord—you must bind the hands and feet of the old priest inside, and then you must bind mine likewise."

"Never," quoth Hereward.

"It must be. How else can I explain your having got the key? I made them give me the key on the pretence that with one who had most cause to hate you, it would be safe; and when they come and find

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us in the morning I shall tell them how I came here to stab you with my own hands—you must lay the dagger by me—and how you and your man fell upon us and bound us, and you escaped. Ah! Mary Mother," continued the maiden with a sigh, "when shall we poor weak women have no more need of lying?"

She lay down, and Hereward, in spite of himself, gently bound her hands and feet, kissing them as he bound them.

"I shall do well here upon the altar steps," said she. "How can I spend my time better till the morning light than to lie here and pray?"

The old priest, who was plainly in the plot, submitted meekly to the same fate; and Hereward and Martin Lightfoot stole out, locking the door, but leaving the key in it outside. To scramble over the old earthwork was an easy matter; and in a few minutes they were hurrying down the valley to the sea, with a fresh breeze blowing behind them from the north.

"Did I not tell you, my lord," said Martin Lightfoot, "to keep your curses till you had seen the end of this adventure?"

Hereward was silent. His brain was still whirling from the adventures of the day, and his heart was very deeply touched. His shrift of the morning, hurried and formal as it had been, had softened him. His danger—for he felt how he had been face to face with death—had softened him likewise; and he repented somewhat of his vainglorious and bloodthirsty

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boasting over a fallen foe, as he began to see that there was a purpose more noble in life than ranging land and sea, a ruffian among ruffians, seeking for glory amid blood and flame. The idea of chivalry, of succouring the weak and the oppressed, of keeping faith and honour not merely towards men who could avenge themselves, but towards women who could not; the dim dawn of purity, gentleness, and the conquest of his own fierce passions—all these had taken root in his heart during his adventure with the fair Cornish girl. The seed was sown. Would it be cut down again by the bitter blasts of the rough fighting world, or would it grow and bear the noble fruit of "gentle very perfect knighthood"?

They reached the ship, clambered on board without ceremony, at the risk of being taken and killed as robbers, and told their case. The merchants had not completed their cargo of tin. Hereward offered to make up their loss to them, if they would set sail at once; and they, feeling that the place would be for some time to come too hot to hold them, and being also in high delight, like honest Ostmen, with Hereward's prowess, agreed to sail straight for Waterford, and complete their cargo there. But the tide was out. It was three full hours before the ship could float; and for three full hours they waited in fear and trembling, expecting the Cornishmen to be down upon them in a body every moment; under which wholesome fear some on board prayed fervently who had never been known to pray before.

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CHAPTER IV.

HOW HEREWARD TOOK SERVICE WITH RANALD, KING OF WATERFORD.

THE coasts of Ireland were in a state of comparative peace in the middle of the eleventh century. The ships of Loghlin, seen far out at sea, no longer drove the population shrieking inland. Heathen Danes, whether fair-haired Fiongall from Norway, or brown-haired Dubhgall from Denmark proper, no longer burned convents, tortured monks for their gold, or (as at Clonmacnoise) set a heathen princess, Oda, wife of Thorkill, son of Harold Haarfagre, aloft on the high altar to receive the homage of the conquered. The Scandinavian invaders had become Christianised, and civilised also—owing to their continual intercourse with foreign nations—more highly than the Irish whom they had overcome. That was easy; for early Irish civilisation seems to have existed only in the convents and for the religious; and when they were crushed, mere barbarism was left behind. And now the same process went on in the east of Ireland, which went on a generation or two later in the east and north of Scotland. The Danes began to settle down

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into peaceful colonists and traders. Ireland was poor; and the convents plundered once could not be plundered again. The Irish were desperately brave. Ill-armed and almost naked, they were as perfect in the arts of forest warfare as those modern Maories whom they so much resembled; and though their black skenes and light darts were no match for the Danish swords and battle-axes which they adopted during the middle age, or their plaid trousers and felt capes for the Danish helmet and chain corselet, still an Irishman was so ugly a foe, that it was not worth while to fight with him unless he could be robbed afterwards. The Danes, who, like their descendants of Northumbria, Moray, and Sutherland, were canny common-sense folk, with a shrewd eye to interest, found, somewhat to their regret, that there were trades even more profitable than robbery and murder. They therefore concentrated themselves round harbours and river mouths, and sent forth their ships to all the western seas, from Dublin, Waterford, Wexford, Cork, or Limerick. Every important seaport in Ireland owes its existence to those sturdy Vikings' sons. In each of these towns they had founded a petty kingdom, which endured until, and even in some cases after, the conquest of Ireland by Henry II. and Strongbow. They intermarried in the meanwhile with the native Irish. Brian Boru, for instance, was so connected with Danish royalty, that it is still a question whether he himself had not Danish blood in his veins. King Sigtryg Silkbeard, who fought

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against him at Clontarf, was actually his step-son—and so too, according to another Irish chronicler, was King Olaff Kvaran, who, even at the time of the battle of Clontarf, was married to Brian Boru's daughter—a marriage which (if a fact) was startlingly within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity. But the ancient Irish were sadly careless on such points; and as Giraldus Cambrensis says "followed the example of men of old in their vices more willingly than in their virtues."

More than forty years had elapsed since that famous battle of Clontarf, and since Ragnvald, Reginald, or Ranald, son of Sigtryg the Norseman, had been slain therein by Brian Boru. On that one day, so the Irish sang, the Northern invaders were exterminated, once and for all, by the Milesian hero, who had craftily used the strangers to fight his battles, and then the moment they became formidable to himself, crushed them till "from Howth to Brandon in Kerry, there was not a threshing-floor without a Danish slave threshing thereon, or a quern without a Danish woman grinding thereat."

Nevertheless, in spite of the total annihilation of the Danish power in the Emerald isle, Ranald seemed to the eyes of men to be still a hale old warrior, ruling constitutionally—that is, with a wholesome fear of being outlawed or murdered if he misbehaved—over the Danes in Waterford; with five hundred fair-haired warriors at his back, two-edged axe on shoulder, and two-edged sword on thigh. His ships

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drove a thriving trade with France and Spain in Irish fish, butter, honey and furs. His workmen coined money in the old round tower of Dundory, built by his predecessor and namesake about the year 1003, which stands as Reginald's Tower to this day. He had fought many a bloody battle since his death at Clontarf, by the side of his old leader Sigtryg Silk-beard. He had been many a time to Dublin to visit his even more prosperous and formidable friend; and was so delighted with the new church of the Holy Trinity, which Sigtryg and his bishop Donatus had just built, not in the Danish or Ostman town, but in the heart of ancient Celtic Dublin (plain proof of the utter overthrow of the Danish power), that he had determined to build a like church, in honour of the Holy Trinity, in Waterford itself. A thriving valiant old king he seemed, as he sat in his great house of pine logs under Reginald's Tower upon the quay, drinking French and Spanish wines out of horns of ivory and cups of gold; and over his head hanging, upon the wall, the huge double-edged axe with which, so his flatterers had whispered, Brian Boru had not slain him, but he Brian Boru.

Nevertheless, then as since, alas! the pleasant theory was preferred by the Milesian historians to the plain truth. And far away inland, monks wrote and harpers sung of the death of Ranald the fair-haired Fiongall, and all his "mailed swarms."

One Teague MacMurrough, indeed, a famous bard of those parts, composed unto his harp a song of

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Clontarf, the fame whereof reached Ranald's ears, and so amused him that he rested not day or night till he had caught the hapless bard and brought him in triumph into Waterford. There he compelled him at sword's point to sing to him and his housecarles the Milesian version of the great historical event; and when the harper in fear and trembling came to the story of Ranald's own death at Brian Boru's hands, then the jolly old Viking laughed till the tears ran down his face; and instead of cutting off Teague's head, gave him a cup of goodly wine, made him his own harper thenceforth, and bade him send for his wife and children, and sing to him every day, especially the song of Clontarf and his own death; treating him very much, in fact, as English royalty during the last generation treated another Irish bard whose song was even more sweet, and his notions of Irish history even more grotesque, than those of Teague Mac-Murrough.

It was to this old king, or rather to his son Sigtryg, godson of Sigtryg Silkbeard, and distant cousin of his own, that Hereward now took his way, and told his story, as the king sat in his hall, drinking across the fire after the old Norse fashion. The fire of pine logs was in the midst of the hall, and the smoke went out through a hole in the roof. On one side was a long bench, and in the middle of it the king's high arm-chair; right and left of him sat his kinsmen and the ladies, and his sea-captains and men of wealth. Opposite, on the other side of the fire, was another

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bench. In the middle of that sat his marshal, and right and left all his housecarles. There were other benches behind, on which sat more freemen, but of lesser rank.

And they were all drinking ale, which a servant poured out of a bucket into a great bull's horn, and the men handed round to each other.

Then Hereward came in, and sat down on the end of the hindermost bench, and Martin stood behind him; till one of the ladies said:

"Who is that young stranger, who sits behind there so humbly, though he looks like an earl's son, more fit to sit here with us on the high bench?"

"So he does," quoth King Ranald. "Come forward hither, young sir, and drink."

And when Hereward came forward, all the ladies agreed that he must be an earl's son; for he had a great gold torc round his neck, and gold rings on his wrists; and a new scarlet coat, bound with gold braid; and scarlet stockings, cross-laced with gold braid up to the knee; and shoes trimmed with martin's fur; and a short blue silk cloak over all, trimmed with martin's fur likewise; and by his side, in a broad belt with gold studs, was the ogre's sword Brain-biter, with its ivory hilt and velvet sheath; and all agreed that if he had but been a head taller, they had never seen a properer man.

"Aha! such a gay young sea-cock does not come hither for nought. Drink first, man, and tell us thy business after," and he reached the horn to Hereward.

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Hereward took it, and sang—

"In this Braga-beaker,
Brave Ranald I pledge;
In good liquor, which lightens
Long labour on oar-bench:
Good liquor which sweetens
The song of the scald."

"Thy voice is as fine as thy feathers, man. Nay, drink it all. We ourselves drink here by the peg at midday: but a stranger is welcome to fill his inside at all hours."

Whereon Hereward finished the horn duly; and at Ranald's bidding, sat him down on the high settle. He did not remark that, as he sat down, two handsome youths rose and stood behind him.

"Now then, Sir Priest," quoth the king, "go on with your story."

A priest, Irish by his face and dress, who sat on the high bench, rose, and renewed an oration which Hereward's entrance had interrupted.

"So, O great king, as says Homerus, this wise king called his earls, knights, sea-captains, and house-carles, and said unto them—'Which of these two kings is in the right, who can tell! But mind you, that this king of the Enchanters lives far away in India, and we never heard of him more than his name: but this king Ulixes and his Greeks live hard by; and which of the two is it wiser to quarrel with, him that lives hard by or him that lives far off?' Therefore, King Ranald, says, by the mouth of my humility, the great Feargus, Lord of Ivark,—'take

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example by Alcinous, the wise king of Fairy, and listen not to the ambassadors of those lying villains, O'Dea Lord of Slievardagh, Maccarthy King of Cashel, and O'Sullivan Lord of Knockraffin, who all three between them could not raise kernes enough to drive off one old widow's cow. Make friends with me, who live upon your borders; and you shall go peaceably through my lands, to conquer and destroy them, who live afar off; as they deserve, the sons of Baylial and Judas.'"

And the priest crost himself, and sat down. At which speech Hereward was seen to laugh.

"Why do you laugh, young sir? The priest seems to talk like a wise man, and is my guest and an ambassador."

Then rose up Hereward, and bowed to the king. "King Ranald Sigtrygsson, it was not for rudeness that I laughed, for I learnt good manners long ere I came here: but because I find clerks alike all over the world."

"How?"

"Quick at hiding false counsel under learned speech. I know nothing of Ulixes, king, nor of this Feargus either: and I am but a lad, as you see: but I heard a bird once in my own country who gave a very different counsel from the priest's."

"Speak on, then. This lad is no fool, my merry men all."

"There were three copses, King, in our country, and each copse stood on a hill. In the first there

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built an eagle, in the second there built a sparhawk, in the third there built a crow.

"Now the sparhawk came to the eagle, and said, 'Go shares with me, and we will kill the crow, and have her wood to ourselves.'

"'Humph!' says the eagle, 'I could kill the crow without your help; however, I will think of it.'

"When the crow heard that, she came to the eagle herself, 'King Eagle,' says she, 'why do you want to kill me, who live ten miles from you, and never flew across your path in my life? Better kill that little rogue of a sparhawk who lives between us, and is always ready to poach on your marches whenever your back is turned. So you will have her wood as well as your own.'

"'You are a wise crow,' said the eagle; and he went out and killed the sparhawk, and took his wood."

Loud laughed King Ranald and his Vikings all. "Well spoken, young man! We will take the sparhawk, and let the crow bide."

"Nay but," quoth Hereward, "hear the end of the story. After a while the eagle finds the crow beating about the edge of the sparhawk's wood.

"'Oho!' says he, 'so you can poach as well as that little hooknosed rogue?' and he killed her too.

"'Ah!' says the crow, when she lay a-dying, 'my blood is on my own head. If I had but left the sparhawk between me and this great tyrant!'

"And so the eagle got all three woods to himself."

At which the Vikings laughed more loudly than

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ever; and King Ranald, chuckling at the notion of eating up the hapless Irish princes one by one, sent back the priest (not without a present for his church, for Ranald was a pious man) to tell the great Feargus, that unless he sent into Waterford by that day week two hundred head of cattle, a hundred pigs, a hundredweight of clear honey, and as much of wax, Ranald would not leave so much as a sucking pig alive in Ivark.

The cause of quarrel, of course, was too unimportant to be mentioned. Each had robbed and cheated the other half-a-dozen times in the last twenty years. As for the morality of the transaction, Ranald had this salve for his conscience, that as he intended to do to Feargus, so would Feargus have gladly done to him, had he been living peaceably in Norway, and been strong enough to invade and rob him. Indeed, so had Feargus done already, ever since he wore beard, to every chieftain of his own race whom he was strong enough to ill-treat. Many a fair herd had he driven off, many a fair farm burnt, many a fair woman carried off a slave, after that inveterate fashion of lawless feuds which makes the history of Celtic Ireland from the earliest times one dull and aimless catalogue of murder and devastation, followed by famine and disease; and now, as he had done to others, so was it to be done to him.

"And now, young sir, who seem as witty as you are good-looking, you may, if you will, tell us your name and your business. As for the name, however,

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if you wish to keep it to yourself, Ranald Sigtrygsson is not the man to demand it of an honest guest."

Hereward looked round, and saw Teague MacMurrough standing close to him, harp in hand. He took it from him courteously enough; put a silver penny into the minstrel's hand; and running his fingers over the strings, rose and began.

"Outlaw and free thief
Landless and lawless
Through the world fare I,
Thoughtless of life.
Soft is my beard, but
Hard my Brain-biter.
Wake, men me call, whom
Warrior and warden
Find ever watchful.
Far in Northumberland
Slew I the witch-bear,
Cleaving his brain-pan,
At one stroke I felled him."

. . . .

And so forth, chaunting all his doughty deeds, with such a voice and spirit joined to that musical talent for which he was afterwards so famous, till the hearts of the wild Norsemen rejoiced, and "Skall to the stranger! Skall to the young Viking!" rang through the hall.

Then showing proudly the fresh wounds on his bare arms, he sang of his fight with the Cornish ogre, and his adventure with the Princess. But always, though he went into the most minute details, he concealed the name both of her and of her father, while he

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kept his eyes steadily fixed on Ranald's eldest son, Sigtryg, who sat at his father's right hand.

The young man grew uneasy, red, almost angry; till at last Hereward sung:—

"A gold ring she gave me
Right royally dwarf-worked,
To none will I pass it
For prayer or for sword stroke,
Save to him who can claim it
By love and by troth plight,
Let that hero speak
If that hero be here."

Young Sigtryg half started from his feet: but when Hereward smiled at him, and laid his finger on his lips, he sat down again. Hereward felt his shoulder touched from behind. One of the youths who had risen when he sat down bent over him, and whispered in his ear,—

"Ah, Hereward, we know you. Do you not know us? We are the twins, the sons of your sister Siward the White and Siward the Red, the orphans of Asbiorn Siwardsson, who fell at Dunsinane."

Hereward sprang up, struck the harp again, and sang—

"Outlaw and free-thief,
My kinsfolk have left me,
And no kinsfolk need I
Till kinsfolk shall need me.
My sword is my father,
My shield is my mother,
My ship is my sister,
My horse is my brother."

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"Uncle, uncle," whispered one of them sadly, "listen now or never, for we have bad news for you and us. Your father is dead, and Earl Algar, your brother, here in Ireland, outlawed, a second time."

A flood of sorrow passed through Hereward's heart. He kept it down, and rising once more, harp in hand—

"Hereward, king, hight I.
Holy Leofric my father,
In Westminster wiser
None walked with king Edward.
High minsters he builded,
Pale monks he maintained.
Dead is he, a bed-death,
A leech-death, a priest-death,
A straw-death, a cow's-death.
Such doom suits not me.
To high heaven, all so softly,
The angels uphand him;
In meads of May flowers
Mild Mary will meet him:
Me, happier, the Valkyrs
Shall waft from the war-deck,
Shall hail from the holmgang
Or helmet-strewn moorland.
And sword strokes my shrift be,
Sharp spears be my leeches,
With heroes' hot corpses
High heaped for my pillow."

"Skall to the Viking!" shouted the Danes once more, at this outburst of heathendom, common enough among their half-converted race, in times when monasticism made so utter a divorce between the life of the devotee and that of the worldling, that it seemed

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reasonable enough for either party to have their own heaven and their own hell. After all, Hereward was not original in his wish. He had but copied the death-song which Siward Digre had sung for himself some three years before.

All praised his poetry, and especially the quickness of his alliterations (then a note of the highest art); and the old king filling not this time the horn, but a golden goblet, bid him drain it and keep the goblet for his song.

Young Sygtryg leapt up, and took the cup to Hereward. "Such a scald," he said, "ought to have no meaner cup-bearer than a king's son."

Hereward drank it dry; and then fixing his eyes meaningly on the Prince, dropt the Princess's ring into the cup, and putting it back into Sygtryg's hand, sang—

"The beaker I reach back
More rich than I took it.
No gold will I grasp
Of the king's, the ring-giver,
Till, by wit or by weapon,
I worthily win it.
When felled by my faulchion
False Feargus lies gory,
While over the wolf's meal
Wild widows are wailing."

"Does he refuse my gift?" grumbled Ranald.

"He has given a fair reason," said the Prince, as he hid the ring in his bosom; "leave him to me; for my brother in arms he is henceforth."

After which, as was the custom of those parts, most

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of them drank too much liquor. But neither Sigtryg nor Hereward drank; and the two Siwards stood behind their young uncle's seat, watching him with that intense admiration which lads can feel for a young hero.

That night, when the warriors were asleep, Sigtryg and Hereward talked out their plans. They would equip two ships; they would fight all the kinglets of Cornwall at once, if need was; they would carry off the Princess, and burn Alef's town over his head if he said nay. Nothing could be more simple than the tactics required in an age when might was right.

Then Hereward turned to his two nephews, who lingered near him, plainly big with news.

"And what brings you here, lads?" He had hardened his heart, and made up his mind to show no kindness to his own kin. The day might come when they might need him; then it would be his turn.

"Your father, as we told you, is dead."

"So much the better for him, and the worse for England. And Harold and the Godwinssons, of course, are lords and masters far and wide?"

"Tosti has our grandfather Siward's earldom."

"I know that. I know, too, that he will not keep it long, unless he learns that Northumbrians are free men and not Wessex slaves."

"And Algar our uncle is outlawed again, after King Edward had given him peaceably your father's earldom."

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"And why?"

"Why was he outlawed two years ago?"

"Because the Godwinssons hate him; as they will hate you in your turn."

"And Algar is gone to Griffin the Welshman, and from him on to Dublin to get ships, just as he did two years ago; and has sent us here to get ships likewise."

"And what will he do with them when he has got them? He burnt Hereford last time he was outlawed, by way of a wise deed, minster and all, with St. Ethelbert's relics on board; and slew seven priests: but they were only honest canons with wives at home, and not shaveling monks, so I suppose that sin was easily shrived. Well, I robbed a priest of a few pence and was outlawed; he plunders and burns a whole minster, and is made a great earl for it. One law for the weak and one for the strong, young lads, as you will know when you are as old as I. And now I suppose he will plunder and burn more minsters, and then patch up a peace with Harold again; which I advise him strongly to do; for I warn you, young lads, and you may carry that message from me to Dublin to my good brother your uncle, that Harold's little finger is thicker than his whole body; and that, false Godwinsson as he is, he is the only man with a head upon his shoulders left in England, now that his father and my father, and dear old Siward, whom I loved better than my father, are dead and gone."

The lads stood silent, not a little awed, and indeed

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imposed on, by the cynical and worldly-wise tone which their renowned uncle had assumed.

At last one of them asked falteringly, "Then you will do nothing for us?"

"For you nothing. Against you nothing. Why should I mix myself up in my brother's quarrels? Will he make that white-headed driveller at Westminster reverse my outlawry? And if he does, what shall I get thereby? A younger brother's portion; a dirty ox-gang of land in Kesteven. Let him leave me alone as I leave him, and see if I do not come back to him some day, for or against him as he chooses, with such a host of Vikings' sons as Harold Hardraade himself would be proud of. By Thor's hammer, boys, I have been an outlaw but five years now, and I find it so cheery a life, that I do not care if I am an outlaw for fifty more. The world is a fine place and a wide place; and it is a very little corner of it that I have seen yet; and if you were of my mettle, you would come along with me and see it throughout to the four corners of heaven, instead of mixing yourselves up in these paltry little quarrels with which our two families are tearing England in pieces, and being murdered perchance like dogs at last by treachery, as Sweyn Godwinsson murdered Biorn Ulfsson, his own cousin."

The boys listened, wide-eyed and wide-eared. Hereward knew to whom he was speaking; and he had not spoken in vain.

"What do you hope to get here?" he went on.

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"Ranald will give you no ships; he will have enough to do to fight this Feargus; and he is too cunning to thrust his head into Algar's quarrels."

"We hoped to find Vikings here who would go to any war on the hope of plunder."

"If there be any, I want them more than you; and what is more, I will have them. They know that they will do finer deeds with me for their captain, than burning a few English homesteads. And so may you. Come with me, lads. Once and for all, come. Help me to fight Feargus. Then help me to another little adventure which I have on hand—as pretty a one as ever you heard a minstrel sing—and then we will fit out a large ship or two, and go where fate leads—to Constantinople, if you like. What can you do better? You never will get that earldom from Tosti. Lucky for young Waltheof, your uncle, if he gets it;—if he, and you too, are not murdered within seven years; for I know Tosti's humour, when he has rivals in his way——"

"Algar will protect us," said one.

"I tell you, Algar is no match for the Godwinssons. If the monk-king died to-morrow, neither his earldom nor his life would be safe. When I saw your father Asbiorn Bulax lie dead at Dunsinane, I said, 'There ends the glory of the house of the bear;' and if you wish to make my words come false, then leave England to founder, and rot and fall to pieces—as all men say she is doing—without your helping to hasten her ruin; and seek glory and wealth too with me around

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the world! The white bear's blood is in your veins, lads. Take to the sea like your forefather, and come over the swan's bath with me?"

"That we will," said the two lads. And well they kept their word.

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CHAPTER V.

HOW HEREWARD SUCCOURED THE PRINCESS OF CORNWALL A SECOND TIME.

FAT was the feasting, and loud was the harping, in the halls of Alef, King of Gweek. Savoury was the smell of fried pilchard and hake; more savoury still that of roast porpoise; most savoury of all that of fifty huge squab pies, built up of layers of apples, bacon, onions, and mutton, and at the bottom of each a squab, or young cormorant, which diffused both through the pie and through the ambient air a delicate odour of mingled guano and polecat. And the occasion was worthy alike of the smell and of the noise; for King Alef, finding that after the ogre's death the neighbouring kings were but too ready to make reprisals on him for his champion's murders and robberies, had made a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, with Hannibal the son of Gryll, King of Marazion, and had confirmed the same by bestowing on him the hand of his fair daughter. Whether she approved of the match or not, was asked neither by King Alef nor by King Hannibal.

To-night was the bridal-feast. To-morrow morning

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the church was to hallow the union, and after that Hannibal Grylls was to lead home his bride, among a gallant company.

And as they ate and drank, and harped and piped, there came into that hall four shabbily drest men—one of them a short, broad fellow, with black elf-locks and a red beard—and sat them down sneakingly at the very lowest end of all the benches.

In hospitable Cornwall, especially on such a day, every guest was welcome; and the strangers sat peaceably, but ate nothing, though there was both hake and pilchard within reach.

Next to them, by chance, sat a great lourdan of a Dane, as honest, brave, and stupid a fellow as ever tugged at oar; and after a while they fell talking, till the strangers had heard the reason of this great feast, and all the news of the country side.

"But whence did they come, not to know it already; for all Cornwall was talking thereof?"

"Oh—they came out of Devonshire, seeking service down west, with some merchant or rover, being seafaring men."

The stranger with the black hair had been, meanwhile, earnestly watching the Princess, who sat at the board's head. He saw her watching him in return; and with a face sad enough.

At last she burst into tears.

"What should the bride weep for, at such a merry wedding?" asked he of his companion.

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"Oh—cause enough;" and he told bluntly enough the Princess's story. "And what is more," said he, "the King of Waterford sent a ship over last week, with forty proper lads on board, and two gallant Holders with them, to demand her; but for all answer they were put into the strong house, and there they lie, chained to a log, at this minute. Pity it is, and shame, I hold, for I am a Dane myself; and pity, too, that such a bonny lass should go to an unkempt Welshman like this, instead of a tight smart Viking's son, like the Waterford lad."

The stranger answered nothing: but kept his eyes upon the Princess, till she looked at him steadfastly in return.

She turned pale and red again: but after a while she spoke.

"There is a stranger there; and what his rank may be I know not: but he has been thrust down to the lowest seat, in a house that used to honour strangers, instead of treating them like slaves. Let him take this dish from my hand, and eat joyfully, lest when he goes home he may speak scorn of bridegroom and bride, and our Cornish weddings."

The servant brought the dish down: he gave a look at the stranger's shabby dress, turned up his nose, and pretending to mistake, put the dish into the hand of the Dane.

"Hold, lads," quoth the stranger. "If I have ears, that was meant for me."

He seized the platter with both hands; and there-

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with the hands both of the Cornishman and of the Dane. There was a struggle: but so bitter was the stranger's gripe, that (says the chronicler) the blood burst from the nails of both his opponents.

He was called a "savage," a "devil in man's shape," and other dainty names, but he was left to eat his squab pie in piece.

"Patience, lads," quoth he, as he filled his mouth. "Before I take my pleasure at this wedding, I will hand my own dish round as well as any of you."

Whereat men wondered, but held their tongues.

And when the eating was over and the drinking began, the Princess rose, and came round to drink the farewell health.

With her maids behind her, and her harper before her (so was the Cornish custom), she pledged one by one each of the guests, slave as well as free, while the harper played a tune.

She came down at last to the strangers. Her face was pale, and her eyes red with weeping.

She filled a cup of wine, and one of her maids offered it to the stranger.

He put it back courteously, but firmly. "Not from your hand," said he.

A growl against his bad manners rose straightway; and the minstrel, who (as often happened in those days) was jester likewise, made merry at his expense, and advised the company to turn the wild beast out of the hall.

"Silence, fool!" said the Princess. "Why should

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he know our west-country ways? He may take it from my hand, if not from hers."

And she held out to him the cup herself.

He took it, looking her steadily in the face; and it seemed to the minstrel as if their hands lingered together round the cup-handle, and that he saw the glitter of a ring.

Like many another of his craft before and since, he was a vain, meddlesome vagabond, and must needs pry into a secret which certainly did not concern him.

So he could not leave the stranger in peace; and knowing that his privileged calling protected him from that formidable fist, he never passed him by without a sneer or a jest, as he wandered round the table, offering his harp, in the Cornish fashion, to any one who wished to play and sing.

"But not to you, Sir Elf-locks: he that is rude to a pretty girl when she offers him wine, is too great a boor to understand my trade."

"It is a fool's trick," answered the stranger at last, "to put off what you must do at last. If I had but the time, I would pay you for your tune with a better one than you ever heard."

"Take the harp, then, boor!" said the minstrel, with a laugh and a jest.

The stranger took it, and drew from it such music as made all heads turn toward him at once. Then he began to sing, sometimes by himself; and sometimes his comrades, "*more Girviorum tripliciter canentes*," joined their voices in a Fenmen's three-man-glee.

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In vain the minstrel, jealous for his own credit, tried to snatch the harp away. The stranger sang on, till all hearts were softened; and the Princess, taking the rich shawl from her shoulders, threw it over those of the stranger, saying that it was a gift too poor for such a scald.

"Scald!" roared the bridegroom (now well in his cups) from the head of the table; "ask what thou wilt, short of my bride and my kingdom, and it is thine."

"Give me, then, Hannibal Grylls, King of Marazion, the Danes who came from Ranald of Waterford."

"You shall have them! Pity that you have asked for nothing better than such tarry ruffians."

A few minutes after, the minstrel, bursting with jealousy and rage, was whispering in Hannibal's ear.

The hot old Punic[1] blood flushed up in his cheeks, and his thin Punic lips curved into a snaky smile. Perhaps the old Punic treachery in his heart; for all that Hannibal was heard to reply was, "We must not disturb the good-fellowship of a Cornish wedding."

The stranger, nevertheless, and the Princess, likewise, had seen that bitter smile.

Men drank hard and long that night: and when daylight came, the strangers were gone.

In the morning the marriage ceremony was performed; and then began the pageant of leading home

[1] Hannibal, still a common name in Cornwall, is held—and not unlikely—to have been introduced there by ancient Phœnician colonists.

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the bride. The minstrels went first, harping and piping: then King Hannibal, carrying his bride behind him on a pillion; and after them a string of servants and men-at-arms, leading country ponies laden with the bride's dower. Along with them, unarmed, sulky, and suspicious, walked the forty Danes, who were informed that they should go to Marazion, and there be shipped off for Ireland.

Now, as all men know, those parts of Cornwall, flat and open furze-downs aloft, are cut, for many miles inland, by long branches of tide river, walled in by woods and rocks; and by crossing one or more of these, the bridal party would save many a mile on their road towards the west.

So they had timed their journey by the tides; lest, finding low water in the rivers, they should have to wade to the ferryboats waist deep in mud; and going down the steep hill-side, through oak, and ash, and hazel-copse, they entered, as many as could, a great flat-bottomed barge, and were rowed across some quarter of a mile, to land under a jutting crag, and go up again by a similar path into the woods.

So the first boat-load went up, the minstrels in front harping and piping till the greenwood rang; King Hannibal next, with his bride; and behind him spear-men and axe-men, with a Dane between every two.

When they had risen some two hundred feet, and were in the heart of the forest, Hannibal turned, and made a sign to the men behind him.

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Then each pair of them seized the Dane between them, and began to bind his hands behind his back.

"What will you do with us?"

"Send you back to Ireland,—a king never breaks his word,—but pick out your right eyes first, to show your master how much I care for him. Lucky for you that I leave you an eye apiece, to find your friend the harper, whom, if I catch, I flay alive."

"You promised!" cried the Princess.

"And so did you, traitress!" and he griped her arm, which was round his waist, till she screamed. "So did you promise: but not to me. And you shall pass your bridal night in my dog-kennel, after my dog-whip has taught you not to give rings again to wandering harpers."

The wretched Princess shuddered; for she knew too well that such an atrocity was easy and common enough. She knew it well. Why should she not? The story of the Cid's Daughters and the Knights of Carrion; the far more authentic one of Robert of Belesme; and many another ugly tale of the early middle age, will prove but too certainly that, before the days of chivalry began, neither youth, beauty, nor the sacred ties of matrimony, could protect women from the most horrible outrages, at the hands of those who should have been their protectors.

But the words had hardly passed the lips of Hannibal, ere he reeled in the saddle, and fell to the ground with a javelin through his heart.

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A strong arm caught the Princess. A voice which she knew bade her have no fear.

"Bind your horse to a tree, for we shall want him; and wait."

Three well-armed men rushed on the nearest Cornishmen, and hewed them down. A fourth unbound the Dane, and bade him catch up a weapon and fight for his life.

A second pair were despatched, a second Dane freed, ere a minute was over; the Cornishmen, struggling up the narrow path toward the shouts above, were overpowered in detail by continually increasing numbers; and ere half an hour was over, the whole party were freed, mounted on the ponies, and making their way over the downs toward the west.

"Noble, noble Hereward!—The Wake indeed!" said the Princess, as she sat behind him on Hannibal's horse. "I knew you from the first moment; and my nurse knew you too. Is she here? Is she safe?"

"I have taken care of that. She has done us too good service to be left here and be hanged."

"I knew you, in spite of your hair, by your eyes."

"Yes," said Hereward. "It is not every man who carries one grey eye and one blue. The more difficult for me to go mumming when I need."

"But how came you hither, of all places in the world?"

"When you sent your nurse to me last night, to warn me that treason was abroad, it was easy for me to ask your road to Marazion; and easier too, when

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I found that you would go home the very way we came, to know that I must make my stand here or nowhere."

"The way you came? Then where are we going now?"

"Beyond Marazion, to a little cove—I cannot tell its name. There lies Sigtryg your betrothed, and three good ships of war."

"There? Why did he not come for me himself?"

"Why? Because we knew nothing of what was toward. We meant to have sailed straight up your river to your father's town, and taken you out with a high hand. We had sworn an oath—which, as you saw, I kept—neither to eat nor drink in your house, save out of your own hands. But the easterly wind would not let us round the Lizard; so we put into that cove, and there I and these two lads, my nephews, offered to go forward as spies, while Sigtryg threw up an earthwork, and make a stand against the Cornish. We meant merely to go back to him, and give him news. But when I found you as good as wedded, I had to do what I could, while I could; and I have done it, like a Wake as I am."

"You have, my noble and true champion," said she, kissing him.

"Humph!" quoth Hereward, laughing. "Do not tempt me by being too grateful. It is hard enough to gather honey, like the bees, for other folks to eat. What if I kept you myself, now I have got you?"

"Hereward?"

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"Oh, there is no fear, pretty lady. I have other things to wake over than making love to you—and one is, how we are to get to our ships, and moreover, past Marazion town."

And hard work they had to get thither. The county was soon roused and up in arms; and it was only by wandering a three days' circuit, through bogs and moors, till the ponies were utterly tired out, and left behind (the bulkier part of the dowry being left with them), that they made their appearance on the shore of Mount's Bay, Hereward leading the Princess in triumph upon Hannibal's horse.

After which they all sailed away for Ireland, and there, like young Beichan—

> "Prepared another wedding,
> With all their hearts so full of glee."

And this is the episode of the Cornish Princess, as told (the outlines of it at least) by Richard of Ely, after Leofric the masspriest's manuscript.

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CHAPTER VI.

HOW HEREWARD WAS WRECKED UPON THE FLANDERS SHORE.

HEREWARD had drunk his share at Sigtryg's wedding. He had helped to harry the lands of Feargus till (as King Ranald had threatened) there was not a sucking pig left in Ivark, and the poor folk died of famine, as they did about every seven years; he had burst (says the chronicler) through the Irish camp with a chosen band of Berserkers, slain Feargus in his tent, brought off his war-horn as a trophy, and cut his way back to the Danish army—a feat in which the two Siwards were grievously wounded; and had in all things shown himself a daring and wakeful captain, as careless of his own life as of other folks'.

Then a great home-sickness had seized him. He would go back and see the old house, and the cattle pastures, and the meres and fens of his boyhood. He would see his widowed mother. Perhaps her heart was softened to him by now, as his was toward her: and if not, he could show her that he could do without her; that others thought him a fine fellow if she did not. Hereward knew that he had won honour

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and glory for himself; that the Wake's name was in the mouths of all warriors and sea-rovers round the coasts as the most likely young champion of the time, able to rival, if he had the opportunity, the prowess of Harold Hardraade himself. Yes, he would go and see his mother: he would be kind if she was kind if she were not, he would boast and swagger, as he was but too apt to do. That he should go back at the risk of his life; that any one who found him on English ground might kill him; and that many would certainly try to kill him, he knew very well. But that only gave special zest to the adventure.

Martin Lightfoot heard this news with joy.

"I have no more to do here," said he. "I have searched and asked far and wide for the man I want, but he is not on the Irish shores. Some say he is gone to the Orkneys, some to Denmark. Never mind; I shall find him before I die."

"And for whom art looking?"

"For one Thord Gunlaugsson, my father."

"And what wantest thou with him?"

"To put this through his brain." And he showed his axe.

"Thy father's brain?"

"Look you, lord. A man owes his father nought, and his mother all. At least, so hold I. 'Man that is of woman born,' say all the world; and they say right. Now, if any man hang up that mother by hands and feet, and flog her to death, is not he that is of that mother born bound to revenge her upon any

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man, and all the more if that man had first his wicked will of that poor mother? Considering that last, lord, I do not know but what I am bound to avenge my mother's shame upon the man, even if he had never killed her. No, lord, you need not try to talk this out of my head. It has been there nigh twenty years; and I say it over to myself every night before I sleep, lest I should forget the one thing which I must do before I die. Find him I will, and find him I shall, if there be justice in heaven above."

So Hereward asked Ranald for ships, and got at once two good vessels, as payment for his doughty deeds.

One he christened the Garpike, from her narrow build and long beak, and the other the Otter, because, he said, whatever she grappled she would never let go till she heard the bones crack. They were excellent new "snekrs," nearly eighty feet long each; with double banks for twelve oars a-side in the waist, which was open, save a fighting gangway along the sides; with high poop and forecastle decks; and with one large sail apiece, embroidered by Sigtryg's princess and the other ladies, with a huge white bear, which Hereward had chosen as his ensign.

As for men, there were fifty fellows as desperate as Hereward himself, to take service with him for that or any other quest. So they ballasted their ships with great pebbles, stowed under the thwarts, to be used as ammunition in case of boarding; and over them the barrels of ale, and pork, and meal, well

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covered with tarpaulins. They stowed in the cabins fore and aft their weapons—swords, spears, axes, bows, chests of arrow-heads, leather-bags of bowstrings, mail-shirts and helmets, and fine clothes for holidays and fighting days. They hung their shields, after the old fashion, out-board along the gunnel, and a right gay show they made; and so rowed out of Waterford harbour amid the tears of the ladies and the cheers of the men.

But, as it befell, the voyage did not prosper. Hereward found his vessels under-manned, and had to sail northward for fresh hands. He got none in Dublin, for they were all gone to the Welsh marches to help Earl Alfgar and King Griffin. So he went on through the Hebrides, intending, of course, to plunder as he went: but there he got but little booty, and lost several men. So he went on again to the Orkneys to try for fresh hands from the Norse earls thereof: but there befell a fresh mishap. They were followed by a whale, which they made sure was a witch-whale, and boded more ill luck; and accordingly they were struck by a storm in the Pentland Firth, and the poor Garpike went on shore on Hoy, and was left there for ever and a day, her crew being hardly saved, and very little of her cargo.

However, the Otter was now not only manned, but over-manned; and Hereward had to leave a dozen stout fellows with Earl Bruce in Kirkwall, and sailed southward again, singing cheerily to his men—

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"Lightly the long-snake
Leaps after tempests,
Gaily the sun-gleam
Glows after rain.
In labour and daring
Lies luck for all mortals,
Foul winds and foul witch-wives
Fray women alone."

But their mishaps were not over yet. They were hardly out of Stronsay Firth when they saw the witch-whale again, following them up, rolling, and spouting, and breaching, in most uncanny wise. Some said that they saw a grey woman on his back; and they knew, possibly from the look of the sky, but certainly from the whale's behaviour, that there was more heavy weather yet coming from the northward.

From that day forward the whale never left them, nor the wild weather neither. They were beaten out of all reckoning. Once they thought they saw low land to the eastward, but what or where, who could tell? and as for making it, the wind which had blown hard from north-east, backed against the sun and blew from west; from which, as well as from the witch-whale, they expected another gale from north and round to north-east.

The men grew sulky and fearful. Some were for trying to run the witch down and break her back, as did Frithiof in like case, when hunted by a whale with two hags upon his back—an excellent recipe in such cases, but somewhat difficult in a heavy sea. Others said that there was a doomed man on board,

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and proposed to cast lots till they found him out, and cast him into the sea, as a sacrifice to Ægir the wave-god. But Hereward scouted that as unmanly and cowardly, and sang—

"With blood of my bold ones,
With bale of my comrades,
Thinks Ægir, brine-thirsty,
His throat he can slake?
Though salt spray, shrill-sounding,
Sweep round in swan's-flights,
True hearts, troth-plighted,
Together we'll die."

At last, after many days, their strength was all but worn out. They had long since given over rowing, and contented themselves with running under a close-reefed canvas whithersoever the storm should choose. At night a sea broke over them, and would have swamped the Otter, had she not been the best of sea-boats. But she only rolled the lee shields into the water and out again, shook herself and went on. Nevertheless, there were three men on the poop when the sea came in, who were not there when it went out.

Wet and wild dawned that morning, showing naught but grey sea and grey air. Then sang Hereward—

"Cheerily, my sea-cocks,
Crow for the day-dawn.
Weary and wet are we,
Water beladen.
Wetter our comrades,
Whelmed by the witch-whales.

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Us Ægir granted
Grudging, to Gondul,
Doomed to die dry-shod,
Daring the foe."

Whereat the hearts of the men were much cheered.

All of a sudden, as is the wont of gales at dawn, the clouds rose, tore up into ribands, and with a fierce black shower or two, blew clean away; disclosing a bright blue sky, a green rolling sea, and a few miles off to leeward a pale yellow line, seen only as they topped a wave, but seen only too well. To keep the ship off shore was impossible; and as they drifted nearer and nearer, the line of sandhills rose, uglier and more formidable, through the grey spray of the surf.

"We shall die on shore, but not dry-shod," said Martin. "Do any of you knights of the tar brush know whether we are going to be drowned in Christian waters? I should like a mass or two for my soul, and shall die the happier within sight of a church tower."

"One dune is as like another, as one pea; we may be anywhere between the Texel and Cap Gris Nez, but I think nearer the latter than the former."

"So much the worse for us," said another. "If we had gone ashore among those Frieslanders, we should have been only knocked on the head outright; but if we fall among the Frenchmen we shall be clapt in prison strong, and tortured till we find ransom."

"I don't see that," said Martin. "We can all be drowned if we like, I suppose?"

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"Drowned we need not be, if we be men," said the old sailing-master to Hereward. "The tide is full high, and that gives us one chance for our lives. Keep her head straight, and row like fiends when we are once in the surf, and then beach her up high and dry, and take what befalls after."

And what was likely to befall was ugly enough. Then, as centuries after, all wrecks and wrecked men were public prey; shipwrecked mariners were liable to be sold as slaves; and the petty Counts of the French and Flemish shores were but too likely to extract ransom by prison and torture, as Guy Earl of Ponthieu would have done (so at least William Duke of Normandy hinted) by Harold Godwinsson, had not William, for his own politic ends, begged the release of the shipwrecked Earl.

Already they had been seen from the beach. The country folk, who were prowling about the shore after the waifs of the storm, deserted jetsom and lagend, and crowded to meet the richer prize which was coming in flotsom, to become jetsom in its turn.

"Axe-men and bow-men, put on your harness, and be ready; but neither strike nor shoot till I give the word. We must land peaceably if we can; if not, we will die fighting."

So said Hereward, and took the rudder into his own hand. "Now then," as she rushed into the breakers, "pull together, rowers all, and with a will."

The men yelled, and sprang from the thwarts as they tugged at the oars. The sea boiled past them,

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surged into the waist, blinded them with spray. The Otter grazed the sand once, twice, thrice, leaping forward gallantly each time; and then, pressed by a huge wave, drove high and dry upon the beach, as the oars snapt right and left, and the men tumbled over each other in heaps.

The peasants swarmed down like flies to a carcase: but they recoiled as there rose over the forecastle-bulwarks, not the broad hats of peaceful buscarles, but peaked helmets, round red shields, and glittering axes. They drew back, and one or two arrows flew from the crowd into the ship. But at Hereward's command no arrows were shot in answer.

"Bale her out quietly; and let us show these fellows that we are not afraid of them. That is the best chance of peace."

At this moment a mounted party came down between the sand-hills: it might be some twenty strong. Before them rode a boy on a jennet, and by him a clerk, as he seemed, upon a mule. They stopped to talk with the peasants, and then to consult among themselves.

Suddenly the boy turned from his party; and galloping down the shore, while the clerk called after him in vain, reined up his horse fetlock deep in water, within ten yards of the ship's bows.

"Yield yourselves!" he shouted, in French, as he brandished a hunting spear. "Yield yourselves, or die!"

Hereward looked at him smiling, as he sat there,

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keeping the head of his frightened horse toward the ship with hand and heel, his long locks streaming in the wind, his face full of courage and command, and of honesty and sweetness withal; and thought that he had never seen so fair a lad.

"And who art thou, thou pretty bold boy?" asked Hereward, in French.

"I," said he, haughtily enough, as resenting Hereward's familiar "thou," "am Arnoul,[1] grandson and heir of Baldwin, Marquis of Flanders, and lord of this land. And to his grace I call on you to surrender yourselves."

Hereward looked, not only with interest, but respect, upon the grandson of one of the most famous and prosperous of northern potentates, the descendant of the mighty Charlemagne himself. He turned and told the men who the boy was.

"It would be a good trick," quoth one, "to catch that young whelp, and keep him as a hostage."

"Here is what will have him on board before he can turn," said another, as he made a running-noose in a rope.

"Quiet, men! Am I master in this ship, or you?"

[1] The French language was at this epoch taking the place of the Teutonic in Southern Flanders: and the boy would call himself Arnoul, while old men would persist in calling him Arnulf, after the fashion of that Count of Guines, who, when upon his death-bed, heard his nephew speak to him in French, and told him that he had no more time for trifles and jests—Nugis et jocis se non posse vacare. Lamb. Ard. in Kervyn de Lettenhoven Hist. de Flandre.

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Hereward saluted the lad courteously. "Verily the blood of Baldwin of the Iron Arm has not degenerated. I am happy to behold so noble a son, of so noble a race."

"And who are you, who speak French so well, and yet by your dress are neither French nor Fleming?"

"I am Harald Naemansson, the Viking; and these my men. I am here, sailing peaceably for England; as for yielding—mine yield to no living man, but die as we are, weapon in hand. I have heard of your grandfather, that he is a just man and a bountiful; therefore take this message to him, young sir. If he have wars toward, I and my men will fight for him with all our might, and earn hospitality and ransom with our only treasure, which is our sword. But if he be at peace, then let him bid us go in peace, for we are Vikings, and must fight, or rot and die."

"You are Vikings?" cried the boy, pressing his horse into the foam so eagerly, that the men, mistaking his intent, had to be represt again by Hereward. "You are Vikings! Then come on shore, and welcome. You shall be my friends. You shall be my brothers. I will answer to my grandfather. I have longed to see Vikings. I long to be a Viking myself."

"By the hammer of Thor," cried the old master, "and thou wouldst make a bonny one, my lad."

Hereward hesitated; delighted with the boy, but by no means sure of his power to protect them.

But the boy rode back to his companions, and talked and gesticulated eagerly.

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Then the clerk rode down, and talked with Hereward.

"Are you Christians?" shouted he, before he would adventure himself near the ship.

"Christians we are, Sir Clerk, and dare do no harm to a man of God."

The clerk rode nearer; his handsome palfrey, furry cloak, rich gloves and boots, moreover his air of command, showed that he was no common man.

"I," said he, "am the abbot of St. Bertin of Sithiu, and tutor of yonder prince. I can bring down, at a word, against you, the chatelain of St. Omer with all his knights, beside knights and men-at-arms of my own. But I am a man of peace, and not of war; and would have no blood shed if I can help it."

"Then make peace," said Hereward, "Your lord may kill us if he will, or have us for his guests if he will. If he does the first, we shall kill, each of us, a few of his men before we die; if the latter, we shall kill a few of his foes. If you be a man of God, you will counsel him accordingly."

"Alas! alas!" said the Abbot with a shudder, "that, ever since Adam's fall, sinful man should talk of nothing but slaying and being slain; not knowing that his soul is slain already by sin, and that a worse death awaits him hereafter than that death of the body, of which he makes so light!"

"A very good sermon, my Lord Abbot, to listen to next Sunday morning: but we are hungry, and wet, and desperate just now; and if you do not settle

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this matter for us, our blood will be on your head—and maybe your own likewise."

The Abbot rode out of the water faster than he had ridden in; and a fresh consultation ensued, after which the boy, with a warning gesture to his companions, turned and galloped away through the sand-hills.

"He has gone to his grandfather himself, I verily believe," quoth Hereward.

They waited for some two hours, unmolested; and, true to their policy of seeming recklessness, shifted and dried themselves as well as they could; ate what provisions were unspoilt by the salt water, and, broaching the last barrel of ale, drank healths to each other and to the Flemings on shore.

At last down rode with the boy a noble-looking man, and behind him knights and men-at-arms. He announced himself as the Chatelain of St. Omer,[1] and repeated the demand to surrender.

"There is no need for it," said Hereward. "We are already that young prince's guests. He has said that we shall be his friends and brothers. He has said that he will answer to his grandfather, the great Marquis, whom I and mine shall be proud to serve. I claim the word of a descendant of Charlemagne."

[1] The chronicler says, "Manasar Count of that land." But I can find no such person in history. There was a Manasses, Count of Guisnes, about that time; but, as will be seen, it could not have been he who received Hereward. I have supposed, therefore, as most probable, that the act was that of the Chatelain of St. Omer. One Waleric held that post in 1072.

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"And you shall have it!" cried the boy. "Chatelain! Abbot! these men are mine. They shall come with me, and lodge in St. Bertin."

"Heaven forfend!" murmured the Abbot.

"They will be safe, at least, within your ramparts," whispered the Chatelain.

"And they shall tell me about the sea. Have I not told you how I longed for Vikings; how I will have Vikings of my own, and sail the seas with them, like my uncle Robert, and go to Spain and fight the Moors, and to Constantinople and marry the kaiser's daughter? Come," he cried to Hereward, "come on shore, and he that touches you or your ship touches me!"

"Sir Chatelain and my Lord Abbot," said Hereward, "you see that, Viking though I be, I am no barbarous heathen, but a French-speaking gentleman like yourselves. It had been easy for me, had I not been a man of honour, to have cast a rope, as my sailors would have had me do, over that young boy's fair head, and haled him on board, to answer for my life with his own. But I loved him at first sight, and trusted him, as I would an angel out of heaven; and I trust him still. To him, and him only, will I yield myself, on condition that I and my men shall keep all our arms and treasure, and enter his service, to fight his foes and his grandfather's wheresoever they will, by land or sea."

"Fair sir," said the Abbot, "pirate though you call yourself, you speak so courtly and clerkly, that I, too, am inclined to trust you; and if my young lord will have

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it so, into St. Bertin I will receive you, till our lord the Marquis shall give orders about you and yours."

So promises were given all round; and Hereward explained the matter to the men, without whose advice (for they were all as free as himself) he could not act.

"Needs must," grunted they, as they packed up each his little valuables.

Then Hereward sheathed his sword, and leaping from the bow, came up to the boy.

"Put your hands between his, fair sir," said the Chatelain.

"That is not the manner of Vikings."

And he took the boy's right hand, and grasped it in the plain English fashion.

"There is the hand of an honest man. Come down, men, if you be wise; and take this young lord's hand, and serve him in the wars; as I shall do."

One by one the men came down; and each took Arnoul's hand, and shook it till the lad's face grew red. But none of them bowed, or made obeisance. They looked the boy full in the face, and as they stepped back, stared round upon the ring of armed men with a smile and something of a swagger.

"These are they who bow to no man, and call no man master," whispered the Abbot.

And so they were: and so are their descendants of Scotland and Northumbria, unto this very day.

The boy sprang from his horse, and walked among them and round them in delight. He admired and handled their double axes; their short sea-bows of

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horn and deer-sinew; their red Danish coats; their black sea-cloaks, fastened on the shoulder with rich brooches; and the gold and silver bracelets on their wrists. He wondered at their long shaggy beards, and still more at the blue patterns with which the English among them, Hereward especially, were tattooed on throat, and arm, and knee.

"Yes, you are Vikings—just such as my uncle Robert tells me of."

Hereward knew well the exploits of Robert le Frison in Spain and Greece. "I trust that your noble uncle," he asked, "is well? He was one of us poor sea-cocks, and sailed the swan's path gallantly, till he became a mighty prince. Here is a man here who was with your noble uncle in Spain."

And he thrust forward the old master.

The boy's delight knew no bounds. He should tell him all about that in St. Bertin.

Then he rode back to the ship, and round and round her (for the tide by that time had left her high and dry), and wondered at her long snake-like lines, and carven stem and stern.

"Tell me about this ship. Let me go on board of her. I have never seen a ship inland at Mons there; and even here there are only heavy ugly busses, and little fishing-boats. No. You must be all hungry and tired. We will go to St. Bertin at once, and you shall be feasted royally. Hearken, villains!" shouted he to the peasants. "This ship belongs to the fair sir here—my guest and friend; and if any man dares to

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steal from her a stave or a nail I will have his thief's hand cut off."

"The ship, fair lord," said Hereward, "is yours, not mine. You should build twenty more after her pattern, and man them with such lads as these, and then go down to

> " 'Miklagard and Spanialand,
> That lie so far on the lee, O!'

as did your noble uncle before you."

And so they marched inland, after the boy had dismounted one of his men, and put Hereward on the horse.

"You gentlemen of the sea can ride as well as sail," said the Chatelain, as he remarked with some surprise Hereward's perfect seat and hand.

"We should soon learn to fly likewise," laughed Hereward, "if there were any booty to be picked up in the clouds there overhead;" and he rode on by Arnoul's side, as the lad questioned him about the sea, and nothing else.

"Ah, my fair boy," said Hereward at last, "look there, and let those be Vikings who must."

And he pointed to the rich pastures, broken by strips of cornland and snug farms, which stretched between the sea and the great forest of Flanders.

"What do you mean?"

But Hereward was silent. It was so like his own native fens. For a moment there came over him the longing for a home. To settle down in such a fair fat land; and call good acres his own; and marry;

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and beget stalwart sons, to till the old estate when he could till no more.—Might not that be a better life—at least a happier one—than restless, homeless, aimless adventure? And now—just as he had had a hope of peace—a hope of seeing his own land, his own folk, perhaps of making peace with his mother, and his king; the very waves would not let him rest, but sped him forth, a storm-tossed waif, to begin life anew, fighting he cared not whom or why, in a strange land.

So he was silent and sad withal.

"What does he mean?" asked the boy of the Abbot.

"He seems a wise man: let him answer for himself."

The boy asked once more.

"Lad! lad!" said Hereward, waking as from a dream. "If you be heir to such a fair land as that, thank God there; and pray to Him that you may rule it justly, and keep it in peace, as they say your grandfather and your father do: and leave glory, and fame, and the Vikings' bloody trade, to those who have neither father nor mother, wife nor land, but live like the wolf of the wood, from one meal to the next."

"I thank you for those words, Sieur Heraud," said the good Abbot, while the boy went on abashed, and Hereward himself was startled at his own saying, and rode silent till they crossed the drawbridge of St. Bertin, and entered that ancient fortress, so strong that it was the hiding-place in war time for all the

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treasures of the country, and so sacred withal that no woman, dead or alive, was allowed to defile it by her presence; so that the wife of Baldwin the Bold, ancestor of Arnoul, wishing to be buried by the side of her husband, had to remove his corpse from St. Bertin to the Abbey of Blandigny, where the Counts of Flanders lay in glory for many a generation.

The pirates entered, not without gloomy distrust, the gates of that consecrated fortress; while the monks in their turn were (and with some reason) considerably frightened when they were asked to entertain as guests forty Norse rovers. Loudly did the elder among them bewail (in Latin lest their guests should understand too much) the present weakness of their monastery, where St. Bertin and St. Omer were left to defend themselves and their monks against the wicked world outside. Far different had been their case some hundred and seventy years before. Then St. Valeri and St. Riquier of Ponthieu, transported thither from their own resting-places in France for fear of the invading Northmen, had joined their suffrages and merits to those of St. Bertin and his whilome servants, with such success that the abbey had never been defiled by the foot of the heathen. But alas! the saints (that is, their bodies) after awhile became home-sick; and St. Valeri, appearing in a dream to Hugh Capet, bade him bring them back to France in spite of Arnulf, Count of those parts, who wished much to retain so valuable an addition to his household gods.

But in vain. Hugh Capet was a man who took

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few denials. With knights and men-at-arms he came, and Count Arnulf had to send home the holy corpses with all humility, and leave St. Bertin and St. Omer to themselves.

Whereon St. Valeri appeared in a dream to Hugh Capet, and said unto him, "Because thou hast zealously done what I commanded, thou and thy successors shall reign in the kingdom of France to everlasting generations."[1]

However, there was no refusing the grandson and heir of Count Baldwin; and the hearts of the monks were comforted by hearing that Hereward was a good Christian, and that most of his crew had been at least baptized. The Abbot therefore took courage, and admitted them into the hospice, with solemn warnings as to the doom which they might expect if they took the value of a horse-nail from the patrimony of the blessed saint. Was he less powerful or less careful of his own honour than St. Lieven of Holthem, who, not more than fifty years before, had struck stone-blind four soldiers of the Emperor Henry's, who had dared, after warning, to plunder the altar?[2] Let them remember, too, the fate of their own forefathers, the heathens of the North, and the check which, one hundred and seventy years before, they had received under those very walls. They had exterminated the people of Walcheren; they had taken prisoner Count

[1] Histoire des Comtes de Flandre, par E. le Glay. E gestis SS. Richarii et Walerici.

[2] Histoire des Comtes de Flandre, par E. le Glay.

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Regnier; they had burnt Ghent, Bruges, and St. Omer itself, close by; they had left nought between the Scheldt and the Somme save stark corpses and blackened ruins. What could withstand them till they dared to lift audacious hands against the heavenly lord who sleeps there in Sithiu? Then they poured down in vain over the Heilig-Veld, innumerable as the locusts. Poor monks, strong in the protection of the holy Bertin, sallied out and smote them hip and thigh, singing their psalms the while. The ditches of the fortress were filled with unbaptized corpses; the piles of vine-twigs which they lighted to burn down the gates, turned their flames into the Norsemen's faces at the bidding of St. Bertin; and they fled from that temporal fire to descend into that which is eternal, while the gates of the pit were too narrow for the multitude of their miscreant souls.[1]

So the Norsemen heard, and feared; and only cast longing eyes at the gold and tapestries of the altars, when they went in to mass.

For the good Abbot, gaining courage still further, had pointed out to Hereward and his men that it had been surely by the merits and suffrages of the blessed St. Bertin that they had escaped a watery grave.

Hereward and his men, for their part, were not inclined to deny the theory. That they had miraculously escaped, from the accident of the tide being high, they knew full well; and that St. Bertin should have done them the service was probable enough.

[1] This gallant feat was performed in A.D. 891.

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He, of course, was lord and master in his own country, and very probably a few miles out to sea likewise.

So Hereward assured the Abbot that he had no mind to eat St. Bertin's bread, or accept his favours without paying honestly for them; and after mass he took from his shoulders a handsome silk cloak (the only one he had), with a great Scotch Cairngorm brooch, and bade them buckle it on the shoulders of the great image of St. Bertin.

At which St. Bertin was so pleased (being, like many saints, male and female, somewhat proud after their death of the finery which they despised during life), that he appeared that night to a certain monk, and told him that if Hereward would continue duly to honour him, the blessed St. Bertin, and his monks of that place, he would, in his turn, ensure him victory in all his battles by land and sea.

After which Hereward stayed quietly in the abbey certain days; and young Arnoul, in spite of all remonstrances from the Abbot, would never leave his side till he had heard from him and from his men as much of their adventures as they thought it prudent to relate.

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CHAPTER VII.

HOW HEREWARD WENT TO THE WAR AT GUISNES.

THE dominion of Baldwin of Lille—Baldwin the Debonair—Marquis of Flanders, and just then the greatest potentate in Europe after the Kaiser of Germany and the Kaiser of Constantinople, extended from the Somme to the Scheldt, including thus much territory which now belongs to France. His forefathers had ruled there ever since the days of the "Foresters" of Charlemagne, who held the vast forests against the heathens of the fens; and of that famous Baldwin Bras-de-fer, who, when the foul fiend rose out of the Scheldt, and tried to drag him down, tried cold steel upon him (being a practical man), and made his ghostly adversary feel so sorely the weight of the "iron arm," that he retired into his native mud—or even lower still.

He, like a daring knight as he was, ran off with his (so some say) early love, Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald of France, a descendant of Charlemagne himself. Married up to Ethelwulf of England, and thus stepmother of Alfred the Great—after her hus-

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band's death behaving, alas for her! not over wisely or well, she had verified the saying,

"Nous revenons toujours
A nos premiers amours,"

and ran away with Baldwin.

Charles, very wroth that one of his earls, a mere lieutenant and creature, should dare to marry a daughter of Charlemagne's house, would have attacked him with horse and foot, fire and sword, had not Baldwin been the only man who could defend his northern frontier against the heathen Norsemen.

The Pope, as Charles was his good friend, fulminated against Baldwin the excommunication destined for him who stole a widow for his wife, and all his accomplices.

Baldwin and Judith went straight to Rome, and told their story to the Pope.

He, honest man, wrote to Charles the Bald a letter which still remains,—alike merciful, sentimental, and politic, with its usual ingrained element of what we now call (from the old monkish word "cantare") cant. Of Baldwin's horrible wickedness there is no doubt. Of his repentance (in all matters short of amendment of life, by giving up the fair Judith), still less. But the Pope has "another motive for so acting. He fears lest Baldwin, under the weight of Charles's wrath and indignation, should make alliance with the Normans, enemies of God and the holy Church; and thus an occasion arise of peril and scandal for the people of

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God whom Charles ought to rule," etc. etc., which, if it happened, it would be worse for them and for Charles's own soul.

To which very sensible and humane missive (times and creeds being considered), Charles answered, after pouting and sulking, by making Baldwin bonâ fide king of all between Somme and Scheldt, and leaving him in peace with Judith, the wicked and the fair.

This all happened about A.D. 863. Two hundred years after, there ruled over that same land Baldwin the Debonair, as "Marquis of the Flamands."

Baldwin had had his troubles. He had fought the Count of Holland. He had fought the Emperor of Germany; during which war he had burnt the cathedral of Nimeguen, and did other unrighteous and unwise things; and had been beaten after all.

Baldwin had had his troubles, and had deserved them. But he had had his glories, and had deserved them likewise. He had cut the Fossé Neuf, or new dyke, which parted Artois from Flanders. He had so beautified the cathedral of Lille, that he was called Baldwin of Lille to his dying day. He had married Adela, the Queen countess, daughter of the King of France. He had become tutor of Philip, the young King, and more or less thereby regent of the north of France, and had fulfilled his office wisely and well. He had married his eldest son, Baldwin the good, to the terrible sorceress Richilda, heiress of Hainhault, wherefore the bridegroom was named Baldwin of Mons. He had married one of his daughters, Matilda,

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to William of Normandy, afterwards the Conqueror; and another, Judith, to Tosti Godwinsson, the son of the great Earl Godwin of England. She afterwards married Welf, Duke of Bavaria; whereby, it may be, the blood of Baldwin of Flanders runs in the veins of Queen Victoria.

And thus there were few potentates of the North more feared and respected than Baldwin, the good-natured Earl of Flanders.

But one sore thorn in the side he had, which other despots after him shared with him, and had even worse success in extracting;—namely, the valiant men of Scaldmariland, which we now call Holland. Of them hereafter. At the moment of Hereward's arrival, he was troubled with a lesser thorn, the count of Guisnes (seemingly, that Manasses whom Richard of Ely confounds with the Chatelain, or other lawful Commander, of St. Omer), who would not pay him up certain dues, and otherwise acknowledge his sovereignty.

Therefore when the Chatelain of St. Omer sent him word to Bruges that a strange Viking had landed with his crew, calling himself Harold Naemansson, and offering to take service with him, he returned for answer that the said Harold might make proof of his faith and prowess upon the said Count, in which, if he acquitted himself like a good knight, Baldwin would have further dealings with him.

So the Chatelain of St. Omer, with all his knights and men-at-arms, and Hereward with his sea-cocks, marched north-west up to Guisnes, with little Arnoul

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cantering alongside in high glee; for it was the first war he had ever seen.

And they came to the Castle of Guisnes, and summoned the Count, by trumpet and herald, to pay or fight.

Whereon, the Count preferring the latter, certain knights of his came forth and challenged the knights of St. Omer to fight them man to man. Whereon there was the usual splintering of lances and slipping up of horses, and hewing at heads and shoulders so well defended in mail that no one was much hurt. The archers and arbalisters, meanwhile, amused themselves by shooting at the castle walls, out of which they chipped several small pieces of stone. And when they were all tired, they drew off on both sides, and went in to dinner.

At which Hereward's men, who were accustomed to a more serious fashion of fighting, stood by, mightily amused, and vowing it was as pretty a play as ever they saw in their lives.

The next day the same comedy was repeated.

"Let me go in against those knights, Sir Chatelain," asked Hereward, who felt the lust of battle tingling in him from head to heel; "and try if I cannot do somewhat toward deciding all this. If we fight no faster than we did yesterday our beards will be grown down to our knees before we take Guisnes."

"Let my Viking go!" cried Arnoul. "Let me see him fight!" as if he had been a pet game-cock or bull-dog.

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"You can break a lance, fine sir, if it please you," said the Chatelain.

"I break more than lances," quoth Hereward, as he cantered off.

"You," said he to his men, "draw round hither to the left; and when I drive the Frenchmen to the right, make a run for it, and get between them and the castle gate; and we will try the Danish axe against their horses' legs."

Then Hereward spurred his horse, shouting "A Wake! A Wake!" and dashed into the press: and therein did mightily, like any Turpin or Roland, till he saw lie on the ground, close to the castle gate, one of the Chatelain's knights with four Guisnes knights around him. At them he rode, and slew them every one; and mounted the wounded Fleming on his own horse and led him across the field, though the archers shot sore at him from the wall. And when the press rode at him, his Danish men got between them and the castle, and made a stand to cover him. Then the Guisnes knights rode at them scornfully, crying—

"What footpad-churls have we here, who fancy they can face horsed knights?"

But they did not know the stuff of the Danish men; who all shouted "A Wake! A Wake!" and turned the lances' points with their targets, and hewed off the horses' heads, and would have hewed off the riders' likewise, had not Hereward bidden them give quarter, according to the civilised fashion of France and Flanders. Whereon all the knights who were

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not taken rode right and left, and let them pass through in peace, with several prisoners, and him whom Hereward had rescued.

At which little Arnoul was as proud as if he had done it himself; and the Chatelain sent word to Baldwin that the new-comer was a prudhomme of no common merit; while the heart of the Count of Guisnes became as water; and his knights, both those who were captives and those who were not, complained indignantly of the unchivalrous trick of the Danes. How villainous for men on foot, not only to face knights, but to bring them down to their own standing ground by basely cutting off their horses' heads!

To which Hereward answered, that he knew the rules of chivalry as well as any of them: but he was hired, not to joust at a tournament, but to make the Count of Guisnes pay his lord Baldwin, and make him pay he would.

The next day he bade his men sit still and look on, and leave him to himself. And when the usual "monomachy" began, he singled out the burliest and boldest knight whom he saw, rode up to him lance point in air, and courteously asked him to come and be killed in fair fight. The knight being, says the chronicler, "magnificent in valour of soul and counsel of war, and held to be as a lion in fortitude throughout the army," and seeing that Hereward was by no means a large or a heavy man, replied as courteously, that he should have great pleasure in trying to kill

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Hereward. On which they rode some hundred yards out of the press, calling out that they were to be left alone by both sides, for it was an honourable duel; and, turning their horses, charged.

After which act they found themselves and their horses all four in a row, sitting on their hind-quarters on the ground, amid the fragments of their lances.

"Well ridden!" shouted they both at once, as they leaped up laughing, and drew their swords.

After which they hammered away at each other merrily in the devil's smithy. The sparks flew; the iron rang; and all men stood still to see that gallant fight.

So they watched and cheered, till Hereward struck his man such a blow under the ear, that he dropped, and lay like a log.

"I think I can carry you," quoth Hereward, and picking him up, he threw him over his shoulder, and walked towards his men.

"Bear and bullock!" shouted they in delight, laughing at the likeness between Hereward's attitude, and that of a bear waddling off on his hind legs with his prey in his arms.

"He should have killed his bullock outright before he went to carry him. Look there!"

And the knight, awakening from his swoon, struggled violently (says the Chronicler) to escape.

But Hereward, though the smaller, was the stronger man; and crushing him in his arms, walked on steadily.

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"Knights, to the rescue! Hoibricht is taken!" shouted they of Guisnes, galloping towards him.

"A Wake! a Wake! To me Vikings all!" shouted Hereward. And the Danes leapt up, and ran towards him, axe in hand.

The Chatelain's knights rode up likewise; and so it befell, that Hereward carried his prisoner safe into camp.

"And who are you, gallant knight?" asked he of his prisoner.

"Hoibricht, nephew of Eustace, Count of Guisnes."

"So, I suppose you will be ransomed. Till then ——Armourer!"

And the hapless Hoibricht found himself chained and fettered, and sent off to Hereward's tent, under the custody of Martin Lightfoot.

"The next day," says the chronicler, "the Count of Guisnes, stupefied with grief at the loss of his nephew, sent the due honour and service to his prince, besides gifts and hostages.

And so ended the troubles of Baldwin and Eustace of Guisnes.

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CHAPTER VIII.

HOW A FAIR LADY EXERCISED THE MECHANICAL ART TO WIN HEREWARD'S LOVE.

In an upper room of her mother's house in St. Omer, sat the fair Torfrida, alternately looking out of the window and at a book of mechanics. In the garden outside, the wryneck (as it is his fashion in May) was calling Pi-pi-pi among the gooseberry bushes, till the cob-walls rang again. In the book was a Latin recipe for drying the poor wryneck, and using him as a philtre which should compel the love of any person desired. Mechanics, it must be understood, in those days were considered as identical with mathematics, and those again with astrology and magic; so that the old chronicler, who says that Torfrida was skilled in "the mechanic art," uses the word in the same sense as does the author of the History of Ramsey, who tells us how a certain holy bishop of St. Dunstan's party, riding down to Corfe through the forest, saw the wicked queen-mother Elfrida (her who had St. Edward stabbed at Corfe Gate) exercising her "mechanic art" under a great tree; in plain English, performing heathen incantations; and how, when she

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saw that she was discovered, she tempted him to deadly sin: but when she found him proof against allurement, she had him into her bower; and there the enchantress and her ladies slew him by thrusting red-hot bodkins under his arms, so that the blessed man was martyred without any sign of wound. Of all which let every man believe as much as he list.

Torfrida had had peculiar opportunities of learning mechanics. The fairest and richest damsel in St. Omer, she had been left early by her father an orphan, to the care of a superstitious mother, and of a learned uncle, the Abbot of St. Bertin. Her mother was a Provençale, one of those Arlesiennes whose dark Greek beauty still shines, like diamonds set in jet, in the doorways of the quaint old city. Gay enough in her youth, she had, like a true southern woman, taken to superstition in her old age; and spent her days in the churches, leaving her daughter to do and learn what she would. Torfrida's nurse, moreover, was a Lapp woman, carried off in some pirating foray, and skilled in all the sorceries for which the Lapps were famed throughout the North. Her uncle, partly from good-nature, partly from a pious hope that she might enter religion, and leave her wealth to the Church, had made her his pupil, and taught her the mysteries of books; and she had proved to be a strangely apt scholar. Grammar, rhetoric, Latin prose and poetry, such as were taught in those days, she mastered ere she was grown up. Then she fell upon romance; and Charlemagne and his Paladins, the heroes of Troy,

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Alexander and his generals, peopled her imagination. She had heard, too, of the great necromancer Virgilius (for into such the middle age transformed the poet), and, her fancy already excited by her Lapp nurse's occult science, she began eagerly to court forbidden lore.

Forbidden, indeed, was magic by the Church; but as a reality, not as an imposture. Those whose consciences were tough and their faith weak, had little scruple in applying to a witch, and asking help from the powers below, when the saints above were slack to hear them. Churchmen, even, were bold enough to learn the mysteries of nature, Algebra, Judicial Astrology, and the occult powers of herbs, stones, and animals, from the Mussulman doctors of Cordova and Seville; and, like Pope Gerbert, mingle science and magic in a fashion excusable enough in days when true inductive science did not exist.

Nature had her miraculous powers,—how far good, how far evil, who could tell? The belief that God was the sole maker and ruler of the universe, was confused and darkened by the cross-belief that the material world had fallen under the dominion of Satan and his demons; that millions of spirits, good and evil in every degree, exercised continually powers over crops and cattle, mines and wells, storms and lightning, health and disease. Riches, honours, and royalties, too, were under the command of the powers of darkness. For that generation, which was but too apt to take its Bible in hand upside down, had some-

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how a firm faith in the word of the devil, and believed devoutly his somewhat startling assertion, that the kingdoms of the world were his, and the glory of them; for to him they were delivered, and to whomsoever he would he gave them: while it had a proportionally weak faith in our Lord's answer, that they were to worship and serve the Lord God alone. How far these powers extended; how far they might be counteracted; how far lawfully employed, were questions which exercised the minds of men, and produced a voluminous literature for several centuries; till the search died out, for very weariness of failure, at the end of the seventeenth century.

The Abbot of St. Bertin, therefore, did not hesitate to keep in his private library more than one volume which he would not have willingly lent to the simple monks under his charge; nor to Torfrida either, had she not acquired so complete a command over the good old man, that he could deny her nothing.

So she read of Gerbert, Pope Silvester II., who had died only a generation back: how (to quote William of Malmesbury) "he learned at Seville till he surpassed Ptolemy with the astrolabe, Alcandrus in astronomy, and Julius Firmicus in judicial astrology; how he learned what the singing and flight of birds portended, and acquired the art of calling up spirits from hell; and, in short, whatever—hurtful or healthful—human curiosity had discovered, besides the lawful sciences of arithmetic and astronomy, music and geometry;" how he acquired from the Saracens the abacus (a

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counting table); how he escaped from the Moslem magician, his tutor, by making a compact with the foul fiend, and putting himself beyond the power of magic, by hanging himself under a wooden bridge, so as to touch neither earth nor water; how he taught Robert King of France, and Kaiser Otto III., surnamed "The wonder of the world;" how he made an hydraulic organ which played tunes by steam, standing even then in the Cathedral of Rheims; how he discovered in the Campus Martius at Rome wondrous treasures, and a golden king and queen, golden courtiers and guards, all lighted by a single carbuncle, and guarded by a boy with a bent bow; who, when Gerbert's servant stole a golden knife, shot an arrow at that carbuncle; and all was darkness, and yells of demons.

All this Torfrida had read; and read, too, how Gerbert's brazen head had told him that he should be Pope, and not die till he had sung mass at Jerusalem; and how both had come true—the latter in mockery; for he was stricken with deadly sickness in Rome, as he sang mass at the church called Jerusalem, and died horribly, tearing himself in pieces.

Which terrible warning had as little effect on Torfrida as other terrible warnings have on young folk, who are minded to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

So Torfrida beguiled her lonely life in that dull town, looking out over dreary flats and muddy dykes, by a whole dream-world of fantastic imaginations, and

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was ripe and ready for any wild deed which her wild brain might suggest.

Pure she was all the while, generous and noble-hearted; with a deep and sincere longing—as one soul in ten thousand has—after knowledge for its own sake: but ambitious exceedingly, and that not of monastic sanctity. She laughed to scorn the notion of a nunnery; and laughed to scorn equally the notion of marrying any knight, however much of a prudhomme, whom she had yet seen. Her uncle and Marquis Baldwin could have between them compelled her, as an orphan heiress, to marry whom they liked. But Torfrida had as yet managed both the Abbot and the Marquis successfully. Lances had been splintered, helmets split, and more than one life lost in her honour: but she had only, as the best safeguard she could devise, given some hint of encouragement to one Ascelin, a tall knight of St. Valeri, the most renowned and courtly bully of those parts, by bestowing on him a scrap of ribbon, and bidding him keep it against all comers. By this means she ensured the personal chastisement of all other youths who dared to lift their eyes to her, while she by no means bound herself to her spadassin of St. Valeri. The method was rough: but so was the time; and what better could a poor lady do in days when no man's life, or woman's honour, was safe, unless (as too many were forced to do) she retired into a cloister, and got from the Church that peace which this world certainly could not give, and, happily, dared not take away?

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The arrival of Hereward and his men had, of course, stirred the great current of her life, and, indeed, that of St. Omer, usually as stagnant as the dykes round its wall. Who the unknown champion was (for his name of Naemansson showed that he was concealing something at least)—whence he had come, and what had been his previous exploits, busied all the gossips of the town. Would he and his men rise and plunder the abbey? Was not the Chatelain mad in leaving young Arnoul with him all day? Madder still, in taking him out to battle against the Count of Guisnes? He might be a spy, the avant-courier of some great invading force. He was come to spy out the nakedness of the land, and would shortly vanish, to return with Harold Hardraade of Norway, or Sweyn of Denmark, and all their hosts. Nay, was he not Harold Hardraade himself in disguise? And so forth. All which Torfrida heard, and thought within herself that, be he who he might, she should like to look on him again.

Then came the news how, the very first day that he had gone out against the Count of Guisnes, he had gallantly rescued a wounded man. A day or two after came fresh news of some doughty deed; and then another and another. And when Hereward returned, after a week's victorious fighting, all St. Omer was in the street to stare at him.

Then Torfrida heard enough, and, had it been possible, more than enough, of Hereward and his prowess.

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And when they came riding in, the great Marquis at the head of them all, with Robert le Frison on one side of him, and on the other Hereward, as fresh as flowers in May, Torfrida looked down on him out of her little lattice in the gable, and loved him, once and for all, with all her heart and soul.

And Hereward looked up at her and her dark blue eyes and dark raven locks; and thought her the fairest thing that he had ever seen, and asked who she might be, and heard; and as he heard, he forgot all about the Sultan's daughter, and the Princess of Constantinople, and the Fairy of Brocheliaunde, and all the other pretty birds which were still in the bush about the wide world: and thought for many a day of nought but the pretty bird which he held (so conceited was he of his own powers of winning her) there safe in hand in St. Omer.

So he cast about to see her, and to win her love. And she cast about to see him, and to win his love. But neither saw the other for awhile; and it might have been better for one of them had they never seen each other again.

If Torfrida could have foreseen, and foreseen, and foreseen:——why, if she were true woman, she would have done exactly what she did, and taken the bitter with the sweet, the unknown with the known, as we all must do in life, unless we wish to live and die alone.

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CHAPTER IX.

HOW HEREWARD WENT TO THE WAR IN SCALDMARILAND.

It has been shown how the Count of Guisnes had been a thorn in the side of Baldwin of Lille, and how that thorn was drawn out by Hereward. But far sharper thorns in his side, which had troubled many a Count before, and were destined to trouble others afterward, were those unruly Zeelanders, or Frisians, who dwelt in Scaldmariland, "the land of the meres of the Scheldt." Beyond the vast forests of Flanders, in morasses and alluvial islands whose names it is impossible now to verify, so much has the land changed, both by inundations and by embankments, by the brute forces of nature and the noble triumphs of art, dwelt a folk, poor and savage; living mostly, as in Cæsar's time, in huts raised above the sea, on piles or mounds of earth; often without cattle or seed-field; half savage, half heathen: but free. Free, with the divine instinct of freedom, and all the self-help and energy which spring thereout.

They were a mongrel race; and, as most mongrel races are (when sprung from parents not too far apart

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in blood), a strong race; the remnant of those old Frisians and Batavians, who had defied, and all but successfully resisted, the power of Rome; mingled with fresh crosses of Teutonic blood from Frank, Sueve, Saxon, and the other German tribes, who, after the fall of the Roman Empire, had swept across the land.

Their able modern historian has well likened their first struggle—that between Civilis and the Romans, to their last—that between William the Silent and the Spaniard. It was, without doubt, the foreshadow of their whole history. They were distinguished, above most European races, for sturdy independence, and for what generally accompanies it—sturdy common sense. They could not understand why they should obey foreign Frank rulers, whether set over them by Dagobert or by Charlemagne. They could not understand why they were to pay tithes to foreign Frank priests, who had forced on them, at the sword's point, a religion which they only half believed and only half understood. Many a true holy man preached to them to the best of his powers: but the cross of St. Boniface had too often to follow the sword of Charles Martel; and for every Frisian who was converted another was killed.

"Free Frisians," nevertheless, they remained, at least in name and in their statute book, "as long as the wind blows out of the clouds and the world stands." The feudal system never took root in their soil.[1] If a Frank Count was to govern them, he

[1] Motley. "Rise of the Dutch Republic."

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must govern according to their own laws. Again and again they rebelled, even against that seemingly light rule. Again and again they brought down on themselves the wrath of their nominal sovereigns, the Counts of Flanders; then of the Kaisers of Germany; and, in the thirteenth century, of the Inquisition itself. Then a crusade was preached against them as "Stadings," heretics who paid no tithes, ill-used monks and nuns, and worshipped (or were said to worship) a black cat and the foul fiend among the meres and fens. Conrad of Marpurg, the brutal Director of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, burnt them at his wicked will, extirpating it may be heresy, but not the spirit of the race. That spirit, crushed down and seemingly enslaved during the middle age, under Count Dirk and his descendants, still lived; destined at last to conquer. They were a people who had determined to see for themselves and act for themselves in the universe in which they found themselves; and, moreover (a necessary corollary of such a resolution), to fight to the death against any one who interfered with them in so doing.

Again and again, therefore, the indomitable spirit rose, founding free towns with charters and guilds; embanking the streams; draining the meres; fighting each other and the neighbouring princes; till, in their last great struggle against the Pope and Spain, they rose once and for all,

> "Heated hot with burning fears,
> And bathed in baths of hissing tears,

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And battered with the strokes of doom
To shape and use,"

as the great Protestant Dutch Republic.

A noble errand it had been for such a man as Hereward to help those men toward freedom, instead of helping Frank Counts to enslave them;—men of his own blood, with laws and customs like those of his own Anglo-Danes, living in a land so exactly like his own that every mere and fen and wood reminded him of the scenes of his boyhood. The very names of the two lands were alike—"Holland," the hollow land—the one of England, the other of Flanders.

But all this was hidden from Hereward. To do as he would be done by was a lesson which he had never been taught. If men had invaded his land, he would have cried, like the Frisians whom he was going to enslave, "I am free as long as the wind blows out of the clouds!" and died where he stood. But that was not the least reason why he should not invade any other man's land, and try whether or not he, too, would die where he stood. To him these Frieslanders were simply savages, probably heathens, who would not obey their lawful lord, a gentleman and a Christian; besides, renown, and possibly a little plunder, might be got by beating them into obedience. He knew not what he did; and knew not, likewise, that as he had done to others, so would it be done to him.

Baldwin had at that time made over his trouble-

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some Hollanders to his younger son Robert, the Viking whom little Arnoul longed to imitate.

Florent, Count of Holland, and vassal of the great Marquis, had just died, leaving a pretty young widow, to whom the Hollanders had no mind to pay one stiver more than they were forced. All the isles of Zeeland, and the counties of Eenham and Alost, were doing that which was right in the sight of their own eyes, and finding themselves none the worse therefor; though the Countess Gertrude, doubtless, could buy fewer silks of Greece or gems of Italy. But to such a distressed lady a champion could not long be wanting. Robert had been driven out of Spain by the Moors with fearful loss, and, in a second attempt, wrecked with all his fleet as soon as he got out of port. He then, it would seem, started in palmer's guise, nominally for Jerusalem, but really for Byzant. For, according to Lambert of Aschaffenbourg, certain Norman Vikings had offered to make him Kaiser of Greece, and more than rival of Robert Guiscard in his new Italian kingdom. But the existing Greek Kaiser, hearing of the plot, commanded him to be slain as soon as he set foot on shore. To avoid which end the disappointed palmer wended homeward once more, and resolved to change thenceforth the salt water for the fresh, and leave the swan's-path for that of the humble ducks and geese of Holland.

So he rushed to avenge the wrongs of the Countess Gertrude; and his father, whose good sense foresaw

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that the fiery Robert would raise storms upon his path—happily for his old age he did not foresee the worst—let him go, with his blessing.

Then Robert gathered to him valiant ruffians, as many as he could find; and when he heard of the Viking who had brought Eustace of Guisnes to reason, it seemed to him that he was a man who would do his work. And when the great Marquis came down to St. Omer to receive the homage of Count Eustace of Guisnes, Robert came thither too, and saw Hereward.

"You have done us good service, Harold Naemansson, as it pleases you to be called," said Baldwin smiling. "But some man's son you are, if ever I saw a gallant knight, earl-born by his looks as well as his deeds."

Hereward bowed.

"And for me," said Robert, "Naemansson or Earl's son, here is my Viking's welcome to all Vikings like myself." And he held out his hand.

Hereward took it.

"You failed in Galicia, beausire, only because your foes were a hundred to one. You will not fail where you are going, if (as I hear) they are but ten to one."

Robert laughed, vain and gratified.

"Then you know where I have been, and where I am going?"

"Why not? As you know well, we Vikings are all brothers; and all know each other's counsel, from ship to ship, and port to port."

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Then the two young men looked each other in the face, and each saw that the other was a man who would suit him.

"Skall to the Viking!" cried Robert, aping, as was his fancy, the Norse rovers' slang. "Will you come with me to Holland?"

"You must ask my young lord there," and he pointed to Arnoul. "I am his man now, by all laws of honour."

A flush of jealousy passed over Robert's face. He, haplessly for himself, thought that he had a grievance.

The rights of primogeniture—"droits d'ainesse"—were not respected in the family of the Baldwins as they should have been, had prudence and common sense had their way.

No sacred or divine right was held to be conferred by the fact of a man's being the first-born son. As among the Jews of old, the "Lord's anointed" was usually rather a younger son of talent and virtue; one born, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, like David and Solomon. And so it was in other realms besides Flanders during the middle age. The father handed on the work—for ruling was hard work in those days—to the son most able to do it. Therefore we can believe Lambert of Aschaffenbourg when he says, that in Count Baldwin's family for many ages the son who pleased his father most took his father's name, and was hereditary prince of all Flanders; while the other brothers led an inglorious life of vassalage to him.

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But we can conceive, likewise, that such a method would give rise to intrigues, envyings, calumnies, murders, fratricidal civil wars, and all the train of miseries which for some years after this history made infamous the house of Baldwin; as they did many another royal house, till they were stopped by the gradual adoption of the rational rule of primogeniture.

So Robert, who might have been a daring and useful friend to his brother, had he been forced to take for granted from birth that he was nothing, and his brother all in all—as do all younger sons of English noblemen, to their infinite benefit—held himself to be an injured man for life, because his father called his first-born Baldwin, and promised him the succession,—which indeed he had worthily deserved, according to the laws of Mammon and this world, by bringing into the family such an heiress as Richilda, and such a dowry as Mons.

But Robert, who thought himself as good as his brother (though he was not such save in valour), nursed black envy in his heart. Hard it was to him to hear his elder brother called Baldwin of Mons, when he himself had not a foot of land of his own. Harder still to hear him called Baldwin the Good, when he felt in himself no title whatsoever to that epithet. Hardest of all to see a beautiful boy grow up, as heir both of Flanders and of Hainault.

Had he foreseen whither that envy would have led him; had he foreseen the hideous and fratricidal day of February 22, 1071, and that fair boy's golden

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locks rolling in dust and blood — the wild Viking would have crushed the growing snake within his bosom; for he was a knight and a gentleman. But it was hidden from his eyes. He had to "dree his weird;" to commit great sins, do great deeds, and die in his bed, mighty and honoured, having children to his heart's desire, and leaving the rest of his substance to his babes. Heaven help him, and the like of him.

He turned to young Arnoul—

"Give me your man, boy!"

Arnoul pouted. He wanted to keep his Viking for himself, and said so.

"He is to teach me to go leding, as the Norsemen call it, like you."

Robert laughed. A hint at his piratical attempts pleased his vanity, all the more because they had been signal failures.

"Lend him me, then, my pretty nephew, for a month or two, till he has conquered these Zeeland frogs for me; and then, if you will go leding with him——"

"I hope you may never come back," thought Robert to himself; but he did not say it.

"Let the knight go," quoth Baldwin.

"Let me go with him, then."

"No, by all saints!" quoth the Marquis, "I cannot have you poked through with a Zeeland pike, or rotted with a Zeeland ague."

Arnoul pouted still.

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"Abbot, what hast thou been at with the boy? He thinks of nought but blood and wounds, instead of books and prayers. He is gone mad after this—this knight."

"The Abbot," said Hereward, "knows by hearing of his ears, that I bid him bide at home, and try to govern lands in peace, like his father and you, Lord Marquis."

"Eh?"

The Abbot told honestly what had passed between Hereward and the lad, as they rode to St. Bertin.

Baldwin was silent, thinking, and smiling jollily, as was the wont of the Debonair.

"You are a man of sense, beausire. Come with me," said he at last.

And Baldwin, Hereward, and Robert went into an inner room.

"Sit down on the settle by me."

"It is too great an honour."

"Nonsense, man! If I be who I am, I know enough of men to know that I need not be ashamed of having you as bench-fellow. Sit down."

Hereward obeyed, of course.

"Tell me who you are."

Hereward looked out of the corners of his eyes, smiling and perplexed.

"Tell me and Robert who you are, man; and be done with it. I believe I know already. I have asked far and wide of chapmen, and merchants, and wandering knights, and pirate rascals—like yourself."

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"And you found that I was a pirate rascal?"

"I found a pirate rascal who met you in Ireland, three years since, and will swear that if you have one grey eye and one blue——"

"As he has," quoth Robert.

"That I am a wolf's head, and a robber of priests, and an Esau on the face of the earth; every man's hand against me, and mine—for I never take but what I give—against every man."

"That you are the son of my old friend Leofric of Chester; and the hottest-hearted, shrewdest-headed, hardest-handed Berserker in the North Seas. You killed Gilbert of Ghent's bear, Siward Digre's cousin. Don't deny it."

"Don't hang me, or send me to the Westminster miracle-worker to be hanged, and I will confess."

"I? Every man is welcome who comes hither with a bold hand and a strong heart. 'The Refuge of Outlaws' they call Flanders; I suppose because I am too good-natured to turn rogues out. So do no harm to mine, and mine shall do no harm to you."

Baldwin's words were true.[1] He found houseroom for everybody, helped everybody against everybody else (as will be seen), and yet quarrelled with nobody

[1] Eltgiva Emma, between Ethelred's ruin and her marriage with Canute; Sweyn Godwinsson when outlawed by Edward the Confessor, and after them, as will be seen, every one who, however fallen, seemed strong enough to rise again some day, took refuge one after another with Baldwin. See, for the history of him and his times, M. Kervyn de Lettenhoven.

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—at least in his old age—by the mere virtue of good-nature.

So Hereward went off to exterminate the wicked Hollanders, and avenge the wrongs of the Countess Gertrude.

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CHAPTER X.

HOW HEREWARD WON THE MAGIC ARMOUR.

TORFRIDA had special opportunities of hearing about Hereward; for young Arnoul was to her a pet and almost a foster-brother, and gladly escaped from the convent to tell her the news.

He had now had his first taste of the royal game of war. He had seen Hereward fight by day, and heard him tell stories over the camp fire by night. Hereward's beauty, Hereward's prowess, Hereward's songs, Hereward's strange adventures and wanderings, were for ever in the young boy's mouth; and he spent hours in helping Torfrida to guess who the great unknown might be; and then went back to Hereward, and artlessly told him of his beautiful friend, and how they had talked of him, and of nothing else; and in a week or two Hereward knew all about Torfrida; and Torfrida knew—what filled her heart with joy—that Hereward was bound to no lady-love, and owned (so he had told Arnoul) no mistress save the sword on his thigh.

Whereby there had grown up in the hearts of both

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of them a mutual interest, which easily became the parent of love.

When Baldwin the great Marquis came to St. Omer, to receive the homage of Eustace of Guisnes, young Arnoul ran into Torfrida's chamber in great anxiety. Would his grandfather approve of what he had done? Would he allow his new friendship with the unknown?

"What care I?" said Torfrida. "But if your friend wishes to have the Marquis's favour, he would be wise to trust him, at least so far as to tell his name."

"I have told him so. I have told him that you would tell him so."

"I? Have you been talking to him about me?"

"Why not?"

"That is not well done, Arnoul, to talk of ladies to men whom they do not know."

Arnoul looked up, puzzled and pained; for she spoke haughtily.

"I know naught of your new friend. He may be a low-born man, for anything that I can tell."

"He is not! He is as noble as I am. Everything he says and does—every look—shows his birth."

"You are young—as you have shown by talking of me to him. But I have given you my advice;" and she moved listlessly away. "Let him tell your grandfather who he is, or remain suspected."

The boy went away sadly.

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Early the next morning he burst into Torfrida's room as she was dressing her hair.

"How now! Are these manners for the heir of Flanders?"

"He has told all!"

"He has!" And she started and dropt her comb.

"Pick up that comb, girl. You need not go away. I have no secrets with young gentlemen."

"I thought you would be glad to hear," said Arnoul.

"I? What can I want in the matter, save that your grandfather should be satisfied that you are entertaining a man worthy to be your guest?"

"And he is worthy: he has told my grandfather who he is."

"But not you?"

"No. They say I must not know yet. But this I know, that they welcomed him, when he told them, as if he had been an Earl's son; and that he is going with my uncle Robert against the Zeelanders."

"And if he be an Earl's son, how comes he here, wandering with rough seamen, and hiding his honest name? He must have done something of which he is ashamed."

"I shall tell you nothing more."

"What care I? I can find out by art magic if I like."

"I don't believe all that. Can you find out, for instance, what he has on his throat?"

"A beard."

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"But what is under that beard?"

"A goître."

"You are laughing at me."

"I shall laugh at any one who challenges me to find out anything so silly, and so unfit."

"I shall go."

"Go then." For she knew very well that he would come back again.

"Nurse," said Torfrida to the old Lapp woman, when they were alone, "find out for me what is the name of this strange champion, and what he has beneath his beard."

"Beneath his beard?"

"Some scar, I suppose, or secret mark. I must know. You will find out for your Torfrida, will you not, nurse?"

"I will make a charm that will bring him to you, were all the icebergs of Quenland between you and him: and then you can see for yourself."

"No, no, no! not yet, nurse!" and Torfrida smiled. "Only find me out that one thing: that I must know."

And yet why she wanted to know, she could not tell herself.

The old woman came back to her ere she went to bed.

"I have found it out, all and more. I know where to get scarlet toadstools; and I put the juice in his men's ale: they are laughing and roaring now, merry-mad every one of them."

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"But not he?"

"No, no. He is with the Marquis. But in madness comes out truth; and that long hook-nosed body-varlet of his has told us all."

And she told Torfrida who Hereward was, and the secret mark.

"There is a Cross upon his throat, beneath his chin; pricked in after their English fashion."

Torfrida started.

"Then—then the spell will not work upon him; the Holy Cross will turn it off."

"It must be a great Cross and a holy one that will turn off my charms," said the old hag, with a sneer, "whatever it may do against yours. But on the back of his hand—that will be a mark to know him by—there is pricked a bear—a white bear that he slew." And she told the story of the fairy beast; which Torfrida duly stored up in her heart.

"So he has the Cross on his throat," thought Torfrida to herself. "Well, if it keep off my charm, it will keep off others—that is one comfort: and one knows not what fairies, or witches, or evil creatures, he may meet with in the forests and the fens."

The discovery of Hereward's rank did not, doubtless, lessen Torfrida's fancy for him. She was ambitious enough, and proud enough of her own lineage, to be full glad that her heart had strayed away—as it must needs stray somewhere—to the son of the third greatest man in England. As for his being an outlaw, that mattered little. He might be inlawed,

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and rich and powerful, any day in those uncertain topsy-turvy times: and for the present, his being a wolf's head only made him the more interesting to her. Women like to pity their lovers. Sometimes—may all good beings reward them for it—they love merely because they pity. And Torfrida found it pleasant to pity the insolent young coxcomb, who certainly never dreamed of pitying himself.

When Hereward went home that night he found the Abbey of St. Bertin in horrible confusion. His men were grouped outside the gate, chattering like monkeys; the porter and the monks, from inside, entreating them vainly to come in and go to bed quietly.

But they would not. They vowed and swore that a great gulf had opened all down the road, and that one step more would tumble them in headlong. They manifested the most affectionate solicitude for the monks, warning them, on their lives, not to step across the threshold, or they would be swallowed (as Martin, who was the maddest of the lot, phrased it) with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. In vain Hereward stormed; assured them that the supposed abyss was nothing but the gutter; proved the fact by kicking Martin over it: the men determined to believe their own eyes, and after awhile fell asleep in heaps in the roadside, and lay there till morning, when they woke, declaring, as did the monks, that they had been all bewitched. They knew not—and happily the lower orders both in England and on the Continent do not

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yet know—the potent virtues of that strange fungus, with which Lapps and Samoiedes have, it is said, practised wonders for centuries past.

The worst of the matter was, that Martin Lightfoot, who had drunk most of the poison, and had always been dreamy and uncanny, in spite of his shrewdness and humour, had, from that day forward, something very like a bee in his bonnet.

But before Count Robert and Hereward could collect sufficient troops for the invasion of Holland, another chance of being slain in fight arose, too tempting to be overlooked; namely, the annual tournaments at Pons and Poitiers,[1] where all the noblest knights of France would assemble, to win their honour and ladies' love by hewing at each other's sinful bodies. Thither, too, over three hundred and fifty miles of bad road, the best knights of Flanders must needs go, and with them Hereward. Though no knight, he was allowed in Flanders, as he had been in Scotland, to take his place among that honourable company. For though he still refused the honour of knighthood, on the ground that he had as yet done no deed deserving thereof, he was held to have deserved it again and again, and all the more from his modesty in declining it.

So away they all went to Poitiers, a right gallant meinie: while Torfrida watched them go from the lattice window.

And when they had passed down the street, tramp-

[1] "Apud Pontes et Pictaviam"—Pons in Xaintonge.

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ing and gingling and caracoling, young Arnoul ran into the house with eyes full of tears, because he was not allowed to go likewise; and with a message for Torfrida from no other than Hereward.

"I was to tell you this and no more: that if he meets your favour in the field, he that wears it will have hard work to keep it."

Torfrida turned pale as ashes; first with wild delight, and then with wild fear.

"Ha!—does he know who—Sir Ascelin?"

"He knows well enough. Why not? Every one knows. Are you afraid that he is not a match for that great ox?"

"Afraid? Who said I was afraid? Sir Ascelin is no ox either, but a courteous and gallant knight."

"You are as pale as death; and Sir——"

"Never mind what I am," said she, putting her hands over the boy's eyes, and kissing him again and again, as a vent for her joy.

The next few days seemed years for length: but she could wait. She was sure of him now. She needed no charms. "Perhaps," thought she, as she looked in the glass, "I was my own charm." And indeed she had a fair right to say so.

At last news came.

Torfrida was sitting over her books; her mother, as usual, was praying in the churches; when the old Lapp nurse came in. A knight was at the door. He said his name was Siward the White, and he came from Hereward.

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From Hereward! He was at least alive: he might be wounded, though; and she rushed out of the chamber into the hall, looking more beautiful than ever; her colour heightened by the quick beating of her heart; her dark hair, worn loose and long, after the fashion of those days, streaming around her and behind her.

A handsome young man stood in the doorway, armed from head to foot.

"You are Siward, Hereward's nephew?"

He bowed assent. She took him by the hands, and, after the fashion of those days, kissed him on the small space on either cheek, which was left bare between the nose-piece and the chain-mail.

"You are welcome. Hereward is—alive?"

"Alive and gay, and all the more gay at being able to send to the Lady Torfrida by me something which was once hers, and now is hers once more."

And he drew from his bosom the ribbon of the knight of St. Valeri.

She almost snatched it from his hand, in her delight at recovering her favour.

"How—where—did he get this?"

"He saw it, in the thick of the tournament, on the helm of a knight who, he knew, had vowed to maim him or take his life; and, wishing to give him a chance of fulfilling his vow, rode him down, horse and man. The knight's French friends attacked us in force; and we Flemings, with Hereward at our head, beat them off; and overthrew so many, that we

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are almost all horsed at the Frenchmen's expense. Three more knights, with their horses, fell before Hereward's lance."

"And what of this favour?"

"He sends it to its owner. Let her say what shall be done with it."

Torfrida was on the point of saying, "He has won it, let him wear it for my sake." But she paused. She longed to see Hereward face to face; to speak to him, if but one word. If she allowed him to wear the favour, she must at least have the pleasure of giving it with her own hands. And she paused.

"And he is killed?"

"Who? Hereward?"

"Sir Ascelin."

"Only bruised: but he shall be killed, if you will."

"God forbid!"

"Then," said the knight, mistaking her meaning, "all I have to tell Hereward is, it seems, that he has wasted his blow. He will return, therefore, to the knight of St. Valeri his horse, and, if the Lady Torfrida chooses, the favour which he has taken by mistake from its rightful owner." And he set his teeth, and could not prevent stamping on the ground, in evident passion. There was a tone, too, of deep disappointment in his voice, which made Torfrida look keenly at him. Why should Hereward's nephew feel so deeply about that favour? And as she looked—could that man be the youth Siward? Young he was, but surely thirty years old at least. His face could

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hardly be seen, hidden by helmet and nose-piece above, and mailed up to the mouth below. But his long moustache was that of a grown man; his vast breadth of shoulder, his hard hand, his sturdy limbs,—these surely belonged not to the slim youth whom she had seen from her lattice riding at Hereward's side. And, as she looked, she saw upon his hand the bear of which her nurse had told her.

"You are deceiving me!" and she turned first deadly pale, and then crimson. "You—you are Hereward himself!"

"I? Pardon me, my lady. Ten minutes ago I should have been glad enough to have been Hereward. Now I am thankful enough that I am only Siward; and not Hereward, who wins for himself contempt by overthrowing a knight more fortunate than he." And he bowed, and turned away to go.

"Hereward! Hereward!" and, in her passion, she seized him by both his hands. "I know you! I know that device upon your hand. At last! at last! My hero, my Paladin! How I have longed for this moment! How I have toiled for it, and not in vain! Alas, alas!—what am I saying?" And she tried, in her turn, to escape from Hereward's mailed arms.

"Then you do not care for that man?"

"For him? Here, take my favour, wear it before all the world, and guard it as you only can; and let all know that Torfrida is your love."

And with hands trembling with passion she bound the ribbon round his helm.

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"Yes! I am Hereward," he almost shouted; "the Berserker, the brain-hewer, the land-thief, the sea-thief, the feeder of wolf and raven—Aoi! Ere my beard was grown, I was a match for giants. How much more now that I am a man whom ladies love? Many a champion has quailed before my very glance. How much more now that I wear Torfrida's gift? Aoi!"

Torfrida had often heard that wild battle-cry of Aoi! of which the early minstrels were so fond—with which the great poet who wrote the Song of Roland ends every paragraph; which has now fallen (displaced by our modern Hurrah) to be merely a sailor's call or hunter's cry. But she shuddered as she heard it close to her ears; and saw, from the flashing eye and dilated nostril, the temper of the man on whom she had thrown herself so utterly. She laid her hand upon his lips.

"Silence! silence for pity's sake. Remember that you are in a maiden's house; and think of her good fame."

Hereward collected himself instantly, and then, holding her at arm's length, gazed upon her. "I was mad a moment. But is it not enough to make me mad to look at you?"

"Do not look at me so, I cannot bear it," said she, hanging down her head. "You forget that I am a poor weak girl."

"Ah! we are rough wooers, we sea-rovers. We cannot pay glozing French compliments like your knights here, who fawn on a damsel with soft words

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in the hall, and will kiss the dust off their queen's feet, and die for a hair of their goddess's eyebrow; and then if they find her alone in the forest, show themselves as very ruffians as if they were Paynim Moors. We are rough, lady, we English: but those who trust us find us true."

"And I can trust you?" she asked, still trembling.

"On God's cross there round your neck," and he took her crucifix and kissed it. "You only I love, you only I will love, and you will I love in all honesty, before the angels of heaven, till we be wedded man and wife. Who but a fool would soil the flower which he means to wear before all the world?"

"I knew Hereward was noble! I knew I had not trusted him in vain!"

"I kept faith and honour with the Princess of Cornwall, when I had her at my will, and shall I not keep faith and honour with you?"

"The Princess of Cornwall?" asked Torfrida.

"Do not be jealous, fair queen. I brought her safe to her betrothed; and wedded she is, long ago. I will tell you that story some day. And now—I must go."

"Not yet! not yet! I have something to—to show you."

She motioned him to go up the narrow stairs, or rather ladder, which led to the upper floor, and then led him into her chamber.

A lady's chamber was then, in days when privacy was little cared for, her usual reception-room; and

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the bed, which stood in an alcove, served as a common seat for her and her guests. But Torfrida did not ask him to sit down. She led the way onward towards a door beyond.

Hereward followed, glancing with awe at the books, parchments, and strange instruments which lay on the table and the floor.

The old Lapp nurse sat in the window, sewing busily. She looked up, and smiled meaningly. But as she saw Torfrida unlock the further door with one of the keys which hung at her girdle, she croaked out:

"Too fast! Too fast! Trust lightly, and repent heavily."

"Trust at once, or trust never," said Torfrida, as she opened the door.

Hereward saw within rich dresses hung on perches round the wall, and chests barred and padlocked.

"These are treasures," said she, "which many a knight and nobleman has coveted. By cunning, by flattery, by threats of force even, have they tried to win what lies here—and Torfrida herself, too, for the sake of her wealth. But thanks to the Abbot my uncle, Torfrida is still her own mistress, and mistress of the wealth which her forefathers won by sea and land far away in the East. All here is mine—and if you be but true to me, all mine is yours. Lift the lid for me, it is too heavy for my arms."

Hereward did so; and saw within golden cups and bracelets, horns of ivory and silver, bags of coin, and

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among them a mail shirt and helmet, on which he fixed at once silent and greedy eyes.

She looked at his face askance, and smiled. "Yes, these are more to Hereward's taste than gold and jewels. And he shall have them. He shall have them as a proof that if Torfrida has set her love upon a worthy knight, she is at least worthy of him; and does not demand without being able to give in return."

And she took out the armour and held it up to him.

"This is the work of dwarfs or enchanters! This was not forged by mortal man! It must have come out of some old cavern, or dragon's hoard!" said Hereward, in astonishment at the extreme delicacy and slightness of the mail-rings, and the richness of the gold and silver with which both hauberk and helm were inlaid.

"Enchanted it is, they say; but its maker, who can tell? My ancestor won it, and by the side of Charles Martel. Listen, and I will tell you how.

"You have heard of fair Provence, where I spent my youth; the land of the sunny south; the land of the fig and the olive, the mulberry and the rose, the tulip and the anemone, and all rich fruits and fair flowers,—the land where every city is piled with temples, and theatres, and towers as high as heaven, which the old Romans built with their enchantments, and tormented the blessed martyrs therein."

"Sun in heaven! How beautiful you are!" cried Hereward, as her voice shaped itself into a song, and

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her eyes flashed, at the remembrance of her southern home.

Torfrida was not altogether angry at finding that he was thinking of her, and not of her words.

"Peace, and listen. You know how the Paynim held that land—the Saracens, to whom Mahound taught all the wisdom of Solomon—as they teach us in turn," she added in a lower voice.

"And how Charles and his Paladins" [Charles Martel and Charlemagne were perpetually confounded in the legends of the time] "drove them out, and conquered the country again for God and His Mother."

"I have heard——" but he did not take his eyes off her face.

"They were in the amphitheatre at Arles, the Saracens, where the blessed martyr St. Trophimus had died in torments; they had set up their idol of Mahound, and turned the place into a fortress. Charles burnt it over their heads: you see—I have seen—the blackened walls, the bloodstained marbles, to this day. Then they fled into the plain, and there they turned and fought. Under Montmajour, by the hermit's cell, they fought a summer's day, till they were all slain.[1] There was an Emir among them,

[1] I have followed the old legends, as Torfrida would have heard them; and they are not altogether to be disbelieved. The Church of the Holy Cross, perhaps the most beautiful Romanesque building in Europe, is said to date not from the year 739, but from 1019, and from Pons de Marignan, Bishop of Arles. But the rock graves round—some of them very old, though not those of "primitive Christians"—indicate a religio loci, which

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black as a raven, clad in magic armour. All lances turned from it, all swords shivered on it. He rode through the press without a wound, while every stroke of his scimitar shore off a head of horse or man. Charles himself rode at him, and smote him with his hammer. They heard the blow in Avignon, full thirty miles away. The flame flashed out from the magic armour a fathom's length, blinding all around; and when they recovered their sight, the enchanter was far away in the battle, killing as he went.

"Then Charles cried, 'Who will stop that devil, whom no steel can wound? Help us, oh blessed Martyr St. Trophimus, and save the soldiers of the Cross from shame!'

"Then cried Torfrid my forefather—'What use in crying to St. Trophimus? He could not help himself, when the Paynim burnt him: and how can he help us? A tough arm is worth a score of martyrs here.'

"And he rode at that Emir, and gript him in his arms. They both fell, and rolled together on the

must have been the cause, not the consequence, of the Church. Probably an older building had existed on the site. And, certainly, if the monks of Montmajour had invented both legend and place, they would have rather chosen for the latter St. Trophimus' cave in the hill above, which is, surely, deducting the Romanesque additions, one of the earliest of Christian monuments. Moreover, the very name Montmajour, the "Mayor's Mount," points to Charles Martel as the hero of the isolated hill forming so strong a military position in the wide plain.

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ground: but Torfrid never loosed his hold till he had crushed out his unbaptized soul, and sent it to join Mahound in hell.

"Then he took his armour, and brought it home in triumph. But after awhile he fell sick of a fever; and the blessed St. Trophimus appeared to him, and told him that it was a punishment for his blasphemy in the battle. So he repented, and vowed to serve the saint all his life. On which he was healed instantly, and fell to religion, and went back to Montmajour; and there he was a hermit in the cave under the rock, and tended the graves hewn in the living stone, where his old comrades, the Paladins who were slain, sleep side by side round the church of the Holy Cross. But the armour he left here; and he laid a curse upon it, that whosoever of his descendants should lose that armour in fight, should die childless, without a son to wield a sword. And therefore it is that none of his ancestors, valiant as they have been, have dared to put this harness on their backs."

And so ended a story, which Torfrida believed utterly, and Hereward likewise.

"And now, Hereward mine, dare you wear that magic armour, and face old Torfrid's curse?"

"What dare I not?"

"Think. If you lose it, in you your race must end."

"Let it end. I accept the curse."

And he put the armour on.

But he trembled as he did it. Atheism and super-

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stition go too often hand-in-hand; and godless as he was, sceptical of Providence itself, and much more of the help of saint or angel, still the curse of the old warrior, like the malice of a witch or a demon, was to him a thing possible, probable, and formidable.

Torfrida looked at him in pride and exultation.

"It is yours—the invulnerable harness! Wear it in the forefront of the battle! And if weapon wound you through it, may I, as punishment for my lie, suffer the same upon my tender body—a wound for every wound of yours, my knight!" [1]

And after that they sat side by side, and talked of love with all honour and honesty, never heeding the old hag, who crooned to herself in her barbarian tongue—

"Quick thaw, long frost,
Quick joy, long pain,
Soon found, soon lost,
You will take your gift again."

[1] "Volo enim in meo tale quid nunc perpeti corpore semel, quicquid eas ferrei vel e metallo excederet."

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CHAPTER XI.

HOW THE HOLLANDERS TOOK HEREWARD FOR A MAGICIAN.

Of this weary Holland war which dragged itself on campaign after campaign for several years, what need to tell? There was, doubtless, the due amount of murder, plunder, burning, and worse; and the final event was certain from the beginning. It was a struggle between civilised and disciplined men, armed to the teeth, and well furnished with ships and military engines, against poor simple folk in "coats stiffened with tar and rosin, or in very short jackets of hide (says the chronicler), who fought by threes, two with a hooked lance and three darts each, and between them a man with a sword or an axe, who held his shield before those two;—a very great multitude, but in composition utterly undisciplined," who came down to the sea-coast, with carts and waggons, to carry off the spoils of the Flemings, and bade them all surrender at discretion, and go home again after giving up Count Robert and Hereward, with the "tribunes of the brigades," to be put to death—as valiant South Sea islanders might have done: and then found them-

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selves as sheep to the slaughter before the cunning Hereward, whom they esteemed a magician on account of his craft and his invulnerable armour.

So at least says Richard of Ely, who tells long confused stories of battles and campaigns, some of them without due regard to chronology; for it is certain that the brave Zeelanders could not on Robert's first landing have "feared lest they should be conquered by foreigners, as they had heard the English were by the French," inasmuch as that event had not then happened.

And thus much of the war among the Meres of Scheldt.

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CHAPTER XII.

HOW HEREWARD TURNED BERSERKER.

TORFRIDA'S heart misgave her that first night as to the effects of her exceeding frankness. Her pride, in the first place, was somewhat wounded; she had dreamed of a knight who would worship her as his queen, hang on her smile, die at her frown; and she had meant to bring Hereward to her feet as such a slave, in boundless gratitude; but had he not rather held his own, and brought her to his feet, by assuming her devotion as his right? And if he assumed that, how far could she trust him not to abuse his claim? Was he quite as perfect, seen close, as seen afar off? And now that the intoxication of that meeting had passed off, she began to remember more than one little fault which she would have gladly seen mended. —Certain roughnesses of manner which contrasted unfavourably with the polish (merely external though it was) of the Flemish and Norman knights; a boastful self-sufficiency, too, which bordered on the ludicrous at whiles even in her partial eyes; which would be a matter of open laughter to the knights of the Court. Besides, if they laughed at him, they

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would laugh at her for choosing him. And then wounded vanity came in to help wounded pride; and she sat over the cold embers till almost dawn of day, her head between her hands, musing sadly, and half wishing that the irrevocable yesterday had never come.

But when, after a few months, Hereward returned from his first campaign in Holland, covered with glory and renown, all smiles, and beauty, and health, and good-humour, and gratitude for the magic armour which had preserved him unhurt, then Torfrida forgot all her fears, and thought herself the happiest maid alive for four-and-twenty hours at least.

And then came back, and after that again and again, the old fears. Gradually she found out that the sneers which she had heard at English barbarians were not altogether without ground. Not only had her lover's life been passed among half brutal and wild adventurers, but, like the rest of his nation, he had never felt the influence of that classic civilisation without which good manners seem, even to this day, almost beyond the reach of the Western races. Those among whom she had been brought up, whether soldiers or clerks, were probably no nobler or purer at heart—she would gladly have believed them far less so—than Hereward; but the merest varnish of Roman culture had given a charm to their manners, a wideness of range to their thoughts, which Hereward had not.

Especially when he had taken too much to drink—which he did, after the Danish fashion, far oftener

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than the rest of Robert's men—he grew rude, boastful, quarrelsome. He would chant his own doughty deeds, and gab (as the Norman word was) in painful earnest, while they gabbed only in sport, and outvied each other in impossible fanfarronades, simply to laugh down a fashion which was held inconsistent with the modesty of a true knight. Bitter it was to her to hear him announce to the company, not for the first or second time, how he had slain the Cornish giant, whose height increased by a foot at least every time he was mentioned; and then to hear him answered by some smart, smooth-shaven youth, who, with as much mimicry of his manner as he dared to assume, boasted of having slain in Araby a giant with two heads, and taken out of his two mouths the two halves of the princess whom he was devouring, which being joined together afterwards by the prayers of a holy hermit, were delivered back safe and sound to her father, the King of Antioch. And more bitter still was it to hear Hereward angrily dispute the story, unaware (at least at first) that he was being laughed at.

Then she grew sometimes cold, sometimes contemptuous, sometimes altogether fierce; and shed bitter tears in secret when she was complimented on the modesty of her young savage.

But Torfrida was a brave maiden; and what was more, she loved him with all her heart. Else why endure bitter words for his sake? And she set herself to teach and train the wild outlaw into her ideal of a very perfect knight.

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She talked to him of modesty and humility, the root of all virtues; of chivalry and self-sacrifice; of respect to the weak, and mercy to the fallen; of devotion to God, and awe of His commandments. She set before him the example of ancient heroes and philosophers, of saints and martyrs; and as much awed him by her learning, as by the new world of higher and purer morality, which was opened for the first time to the wandering Viking.

He, for his part, drank it all in. Taught by a woman who loved him, he could listen to humiliating truths, which he would have sneered at, had they come from the lips of a hermit or a priest. Often he rebelled; often he broke loose, and made her angry, and himself ashamed: but the spell was on him—a far surer, as well as purer spell than any love-potion of which foolish Torfrida had ever dreamed—the only spell which can really civilise man—that of woman's tact, and woman's purity.

Nevertheless there were relapses, as was natural. The wine at Robert the Frison's table was often too good; and then Hereward's tongue was loosed, and Torfrida justly indignant. And one evening, there came a very serious relapse, out of which arose a strange adventure.

It befell that the Great Marquis sent for his son to Bruges, ere he set out for another campaign in Holland; and made him a great feast, to which he invited Torfrida and her mother. For Adela of France, the Queen Countess, had heard so much of Torfrida's

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beauty, that she must needs have her as one of her bower-maidens; and her mother, who was an old friend of Adela's, of course was highly honoured by such a promotion for her daughter.

So they went to Bruges, and Hereward and his men went with them; and they feasted, and harped, and sang; and the saying was fulfilled—

> "'Tis merry in the hall,
> When beards wag all."

But the only beard which wagged in that hall was Hereward's; for the Flemings, like the Normans, prided themselves on their civilised and smooth-shaven chins, and laughed (behind his back) at Hereward, who prided himself on keeping his beautiful English beard, with locks of gold which, like his long golden hair, were combed and curled daily, after the fashion of the Anglo-Danes.

After a while, Hereward's beard began to wag somewhat too fast, as he sat by Torfrida's side. For some knight near began to tell of a wonderful mare called Swallow, which was to be found in one of the islands of the Scheldt, and was famous through all the country round; and insinuated, moreover, that Hereward might as well have brought that mare home with him as a trophy.

To which Hereward answered, in his boasting vein, that he would bring home that mare, or aught else that he had a liking to.

"You will find it not so easy. Her owner, they say, is a mighty strong churl of a horse-breeder, Dirk

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Hammerhand by name; and as for cutting his throat, that you must not do; for he has been loyal to Countess Gertrude, and sent her horses whenever she needed."

"One may pick a fair quarrel with him nevertheless."

"Then you must bide such a buffet as you never abode before. They say his arm has seven men's strength; and whosoever visits him, he challenges to give and take a blow: but no man that has taken a blow as yet, has ever needed another."

"Hereward will have need of his magic head-piece, if he tries that adventure," quoth another.

"Ay," retorted the first speaker; "but the helmet may stand the rap well enough, and yet the brains inside be the worse."

"Not a doubt. I knew a man once, who was so strong that he would shake a nut till the kernel went to powder, and yet never break the shell."

"That is a lie!" quoth Hereward. And so it was, and told purposely to make him expose himself.

Whereon high words followed, which Torfrida tried in vain to stop. Hereward was flushed with ire and scorn.

"Magic armour, forsooth!" cried he at last. "What care I for armour or for magic? I will wager to you"—"my armour," he was on the point of saying, but he checked himself in time—"any horse in my stable, that I go in my shirt to Scaldmariland, and bring back that mare single-handed."

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"Hark to the Englishman! He has turned Berserker at last, like his forefathers. You will surely start in a pair of hose as well, or the ladies will be shamed?"

And so forth, till Torfrida was purple with shame, and wished herself fathoms deep; and Adela of France called sternly from the head of the table to ask what the wrangling meant.

"It is only the English Berserker, the Lady Torfrida's champion," said some one in his most courteous tone, "who is not yet as well acquainted with the customs of knighthood as that fair lady hopes to make him hereafter."

"Torfrida's champion?" asked Adela, in a tone of surprise, if not scorn.

"If any knight quarrels with my Hereward, he quarrels with Robert himself!" thundered Count Robert. "Silence!"

And so the matter was hushed up.

The banquet ended; and they walked out into the garden to cool their heads, and play at games, and dance.

Torfrida avoided Hereward: but he, with the foolish pertinacity of a man who knows he has had too much wine, and yet pretends to himself that he has not, would follow her, and speak to her.

She turned away more than once. At last she was forced to speak to him.

"So! You have made me a laughing-stock to these knights. You have scorned at my gifts. You

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have said—and before these men, too—that you need neither helm nor hauberk. Give me them back, then, Berserker as you are, and go sleep off your wine."

"That will I," laughed Hereward, boisterously.

"You are tipsy," said she, "and do not know what you say."

"You are angry, and do not know what you say. Hearken, proud lass. I will take care of one thing, and that is, that you shall speak the truth."

"Did I not say that you were tipsy?"

"Pish! You said that I was a Berserker. And truth you shall speak; for baresark I go to-morrow to the war, and baresark I win that mare or die."

"That will be very fit for you."

And the two turned haughtily from each other.

Ere Torfrida went to bed that night, there was a violent knocking. Angry as she was, she was yet anxious enough to hurry out of her chamber, and open the door herself.

Martin Lightfoot stood there with a large leather mail, which he flung at her feet somewhat unceremoniously.

"There is some gear of yours," said he, as it clanged and rattled on the floor.

"What do you mean, man?"

"Only that my master bid me say that he cares as little for his own life as you do." And he turned away.

She caught him by the arm:—

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"What is the meaning of this? What is in this mail?"

"You should know best. If young folks cannot be content when they are well off, they will go farther and fare worse," says Martin Lightfoot. And he slipt from her grasp and fled into the night.

She took the mail to her room and opened it. It contained the magic armour.

All her anger was melted away. She cried; she blamed herself. He would be killed; his blood would be on her head. She would have carried it back to him with her own hands; she would have entreated him on her knees to take it back. But how face the courtiers? and how find him? Very probably, too, he was by that time hopelessly drunk. And at that thought she drew herself into herself, tried to harden her heart again, and went to bed, but not to sleep. Bitterly she cried as she thought over the old hag's croon:—

> "Quick joy, long pain,
> You will take your gift again."

It might have been five o'clock the next morning when the clarion rang down the street. She sprang up and drest herself quickly; but never more carefully or gaily. She heard the tramp of horse-hoofs. He was moving a-field early, indeed. Should she go to the window to bid him farewell? Should she hide herself in just anger?

She looked out stealthily through the blind of the little window in the gable. There rode down the

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street Robert le Frison in full armour, and behind him, knight after knight, a wall of shining steel. But by his side rode one bare-headed, his long yellow curls floating over his shoulders. His boots had golden spurs, a gilt belt held up his sword; but his only dress was a silk shirt and silk hose. He laughed and sang, and made his horse caracol, and tossed his lance in the air, and caught it by the point, like Taillefer at Hastings, as he passed under the window.

She threw open the blind, careless of all appearances. She would have called to him: but the words choked her; and what should she say?

He looked up boldly, and smiled.

"Farewell, fair lady mine. Drunk I was last night, but not so drunk as to forget a promise."

And he rode on, while Torfrida rushed away and broke into wild weeping.

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CHAPTER XIII.

HOW HEREWARD WON MARE SWALLOW.

On a bench at the door of his high-roofed wooden house sat Dirk Hammerhand, the richest man in Walcheren. From within the house sounded the pleasant noise of slave-women, grinding and chatting at the handquern; from without, the pleasant noise of geese and fowls without number. And as he sat and drank his ale, and watched the herd of horses in the fen, he thought himself a happy man, and thanked his Odin and Thor that, owing to his princely supplies of horses to Countess Gertrude, Robert the Frison and his Christian Franks had not yet harried him to the bare walls, as they would probably do ere all was over.

As he looked at the horses, some half mile off, he saw a strange stir among them. They began whinnying and pawing round a fourfooted thing in the midst, which might be a badger, or a wolf—though both were very uncommon in that pleasant isle of Walcheren; but which had plainly no buisness there. Whereon he took up a mighty staff, and strode over the fen to see.

He found neither wolf nor badger: but to his ex-

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ceeding surprise, a long lean man, clothed in ragged horse-skins, whinnying and neighing exactly like a horse, and then stooping to eat grass like one. He advanced to do the first thing which came into his head, namely to break the man's back with his staff, and ask him afterwards who he might be. But ere he could strike, the man or horse kicked up with its hind legs in his face, and then springing on to the said hind legs ran away with extraordinary swiftness some fifty yards; after which it went down on all fours and began grazing again.

"Beest thou man or devil?" cried Dirk, somewhat frightened.

The thing looked up. The face at least was human.

"Art thou a Christian man?" asked it in bad Frisian, intermixed with snorts and neighs.

"What's that to thee?" growled Dirk; and began to wish a little that he was one, having heard that the sign of the cross was of great virtue in driving away fiends.

"Thou art not Christian. Thou believest in Thor and Odin? Then there is hope."

"Hope of what?" Dirk was growing more and more frightened.

"Of her, my sister! Ah, my sister, can it be that I shall find thee at last, after ten thousand miles, and seven years of woeful wandering?"

"I have no man's sister here. At least, my wife's brother was killed——"

"I speak not of a sister in woman's shape. Mine,

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alas!—oh woeful prince, oh more woeful princess—eats the herb of the field somewhere in the shape of a mare, as ugly as she was once beautiful, but swifter than the swallow on the wing."

"I've none such here," quoth Dirk, thoroughly frightened, and glancing uneasily at mare Swallow.

"You have not? Alas, wretched me! It was prophesied to me by the witch that I should find her in the field of one who worshipped the old gods; for had she come across a holy priest, she had been a woman again, long ago. Whither must I wander afresh!" And the thing began weeping bitterly, and then ate more grass.

"I—that is—thou poor miserable creature," said Dirk, half pitying, half wishing to turn the subject; "leave off making a beast of thyself awhile, and tell me who thou art."

"I have made no beast of myself, most noble earl of the Frisians, for so you doubtless are. I was made a beast of—a horse of, by an enchanter of a certain land, and my sister a mare."

"Thou dost not say so!" quoth Dirk, who considered such an event quite possible.

"I was a prince of the county of Alboronia, which lies between Cathay and the Mountains of the Moon, as fair once as I am foul now, and only less fair than my lost sister; and by the enchantments of a cruel magician we became what we are."

"But thou art not a horse, at all events?"

"Am I not? Thou knowest, then, more of me

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than I do of myself," and it ate more grass. "But hear the rest of my story. My hapless sister was sold away with me to a merchant: but I, breaking loose from him, fled until I bathed in a magic fountain. At once I recovered my man's shape, and was rejoicing therein, when out of the fountain rose a fairy more beautiful than an elf, and smiled upon me with love.

"She asked me my story, and I told it. And when it was told—'Wretch!' she cried, 'and coward, who hast deserted thy sister in her need. I would have loved thee, and made thee immortal as myself: but now thou shalt wander ugly and eating grass, clothed in the horse-hide which has just dropped from thy limbs, till thou shalt find thy sister, and bring her to bathe, like thee, in this magic well."

"All good spirits help us! And you are really a prince?"

"As surely," cried the thing with a voice of sudden rapture, "as that mare is my sister;" and he rushed at mare Swallow. "I see, I see, my mother's eyes, my father's nose——"

"He must have been a chuckle-headed king that, then," grinned Dirk to himself. "The mare's nose is as big as a buck-basket. But how can she be a princess, man—prince I mean? she has a foal running by her here."

"A foal?" said the thing solemnly. "Let me behold it. Alas, alas, my sister! Thy tyrant's threat has come true, that thou shouldst be his bride whether

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thou wouldst or not. I see, I see in the features of thy son his hated lineaments."

"Why, he must be as like a horse, then, as your father. But this will not do, Master Horse-man; I know that foal's pedigree better than I do my own."

"Man, man, simple though honest!—hast thou never heard of the skill of the enchanters of the East? How they transform their victims at night back again into human shape, and by day into the shape of beasts again?"

"Yes—well—I know that——"

"And do you not see how you are deluded? Every night, doubt not, that mare and foal take their human shape again; and every night, perhaps, that foul enchanter visits in your fen, perhaps in your very stable, his wretched bride restored (alas, only for an hour!) into her human shape."

"An enchanter in my stable? That is an ugly guest. But no. I've been into the stables fifty times, to see if that mare was safe. Mare was mare, and colt was colt, Mr. Prince, if I have eyes to see."

"And what are eyes against enchantments? The moment you opened the door, the spell was cast over them again. You ought to thank your stars that no worse has happened yet; that the enchanter, in fleeing, has not wrung your neck as he went out, or cast a spell on you, which will fire your barns, lame your geese, give your fowls the pip, your horses the glanders, your cattle the murrain, your children St. Vitus's dance,

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your wife the creeping palsy, and yourself the chalk-stones in all your fingers."

"All Saints have mercy on me! If the half of this be true, I will turn Christian. I will send for a priest, and be baptized to-morrow!"

"Oh, my sister, my sister! Dost thou not know me? Dost thou answer my caresses with kicks? Or is thy heart, as well as thy body, so enchained by that cruel necromancer, that thou preferrest to be his, and scornest thine own salvation, leaving me to eat grass till I die?"

"I say, Prince—I say—What would you have a man to do? I bought the mare honestly, and I have kept her well. She can't say ought against me on that score. And whether she be princess or not, I'm loth to part with her."

"Keep her then, and keep with her the curse of all the saints and angels. Look down, ye holy saints" (and the thing poured out a long string of saints' names), "and avenge this catholic princess, kept in vile durance by an unbaptized heathen! May his——"

"Don't, don't!" roared Dirk. "And don't look at me like that" (for he feared the evil eye), "or I'll brain you with my staff!"

"Fool! If I have lost a horse's figure, I have not lost his swiftness. Ere thou couldst strike, I should have run a mile and back, to curse thee afresh." And the thing ran round him, and fell on all-fours again, and ate grass.

"Mercy, mercy! And that is more than I ever

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asked yet of man. But it is hard," growled he, "that a man should lose his money, because a rogue sells him a princess in disguise."

"Then sell her again; sell her, as thou valuest thy life, to the first Christian man thou meetest. And yet no. What matters? Ere a month be over, the seven years' enchantment will have passed; and she will return to her own shape, with her son, and vanish from thy farm, leaving thee to vain repentance; whereby thou wilt both lose thy money, and get her curse. Farewell, and my malison abide with thee!"

And the thing, without another word, ran right away, neighing as it went, leaving Dirk in a state of abject terror.

He went home. He cursed the mare, he cursed the man who sold her, he cursed the day he saw her, he cursed the day he was born. He told his story with exaggerations and confusions in plenty to all in the house; and terror fell on them likewise. No one, that evening, dare go down into the fen to drive the horses up; while Dirk got very drunk, went to bed, and trembled there all night (as did the rest of the household), expecting the enchanter to enter on a flaming fire-drake, at every howl of the wind.

The next morning, as Dirk was going about his business with a doleful face, casting stealthy glances at the fen, to see if the mysterious mare was still there, and a chance of his money still left, a man rode up to the door.

He was poorly clothed, with a long rusty sword by

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his side. A broad felt hat, long boots, and a haversack behind his saddle, showed him to be a traveller, seemingly a horse-dealer; for there followed him, tied head and tail, a brace of sorry nags.

"Heaven save all here," quoth he, making the sign of the cross. "Can any good Christian give me a drink of milk?"

"Ale, if thou wilt," said Dirk. "But what art thou, and whence?"

On any other day, he would have tried to coax his guest into trying a buffet with him for his horse and clothes: but this morning his heart was heavy with the thought of the enchanted mare, and he welcomed the chance of selling her to the stranger.

"We are not very fond of strangers about here, since these Flemings have been harrying our borders. If thou art a spy, it will be worse for thee."

"I am neither spy nor Fleming: but a poor servant of the Lord Bishop of Utrecht's, buying a garron or two for his lordship's priests. As for these Flemings, may St. John Baptist save from them both me and you. Do you know of any man who has horses to sell hereabouts?"

"There are horses in the fen yonder," quoth Dirk, who knew that churchmen were likely to give a liberal price, and pay in good silver.

"I saw them as I rode up. And a fine lot they are: but of too good a stamp for my short purse, or for my holy master's riding,—a fat priest likes a quiet nag, my master."

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"Humph. Well, if quietness is what you need, there is a mare down there, that a child might ride with a thread of wool. But as for price—— And she has a colt, too, running by her."

"Ah?" quoth the horseman. "Well, your Walcheren folk make good milk, that's certain. A colt by her? That's awkward. My lord does not like young horses; and it would be troublesome, too, to take the thing along with me."

The less anxious the dealer seemed to buy, the more anxious grew Dirk to sell: but he concealed his anxiety, and let the stranger turn away, thanking him for his drink.

"I say!" he called after him. "You might look at her, as you ride past the herd."

The stranger assented; and they went down into the fen, and looked over the precious mare, whose feats were afterwards sung by many an English fireside, or in the forest beneath the hollins green, by such as Robin Hood and his merry men. The ugliest, as well as the swiftest, of mares, she was, say the old chroniclers; and it was not till the stranger had looked twice at her, that he forgot her great chuckle-head, greyhound-flanks, and drooping hind-quarters, and began to see the great length of those same quarters, the thighs let down into the hocks, the compact loin, the extraordinary girth through the saddle, the sloping shoulder, the long arms, the flat knees, the large well-set hoofs, and all the other points which showed her strength and speed, and justified her fame.

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"She might carry a big man like you through the mud," said he carelessly: "but as for pace, one cannot expect that with such a chuckle-head. And if one rode her through a town, the boys would call after one, 'All head and no tail'—Why, I can't see her tail for her croup, it is so ill set on."

"Ill set on, or none," said Dirk, testily, "don't go to speak against her pace till you have seen it. Here, lass!"

Dirk was in his heart rather afraid of the princess: but he was comforted when she came up to him like a dog.

"She's as sensible as a woman," said he; and then grumbled to himself, "may be she knows I mean to part with her."

"Lend me your saddle," said he to the stranger.

The stranger did so; and Dirk mounting, galloped her in a ring. There was no doubt of her powers as soon as she began to move.

"I hope you won't remember this against me, madam," said Dirk, as soon as he got out of the stranger's hearing. "I can't do less than sell you to a Christian. And certainly I have been as good a master to you as if I'd known who you were; but if you wish to stay with me, you've only to kick me off, and say so; and I'm yours to command."

"Well, she can gallop a bit," said the stranger, as Dirk pulled her up and dismounted: "but an ugly brute she is, nevertheless, and such an one as I should

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not care to ride, for I am a gay man among the ladies. However, what is your price?"

Dirk named twice as much as he would have taken.

"Half that, you mean." And the usual haggle began.

"Tell thee what," said Dirk at last. "I am a man who has his fancies; and this shall be her price; half thy bid, and a box on the ear."

The demon of covetousness had entered Dirk's heart. What if he got the money; brained, or at least disabled the stranger; and so had a chance of selling the mare a second time to some fresh comer?

"Thou art a strange fellow," quoth the horse-dealer. "But so be it."

Dirk chuckled. "He does not know," thought he, "that he has to do with Dirk Hammerhand," and he clenched his fist in anticipation of his rough joke.

"There," quoth the stranger, counting out the money carefully, "is thy coin. And there—is thy box on the ear."

And with a blow which rattled over the fen, he felled Dirk Hammerhand to the ground.

He lay senseless for a moment, and then looked wildly round.

"Villain!" groaned he. "It was I who was to give the buffet, not thou!"

"Art mad?" asked the stranger, as he coolly picked up the coins, which Dirk had scattered in his fall. "It is the seller's business to take, and the buyer's to give."

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And while Dirk roared in vain for help, he leapt on Swallow, and rode off shouting—

"Aha! Dirk Hammerhand! So you thought to knock a hole in my skull, as you have done to many a better man than yourself? He must be a luckier man than you, who catches The Wake asleep. I shall give your love to the Enchanted Prince, my faithful serving man, whom they call Martin Lightfoot."

Dirk cursed the day he was born. Instead of the mare and colt, he had got the two wretched garrons which the stranger had left, and a face which made him so tender of his own teeth, that he never again offered to try a buffet with a stranger.

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CHAPTER XIV.

HOW HEREWARD RODE INTO BRUGES LIKE A BEGGARMAN.

THE spring and summer had passed, and the autumn was almost over, when great news came to the Court of Bruges, where Torfrida was now a bowermaiden.

The Zeelanders had been beaten till they submitted; at least for the present. There was peace, at least for the present, through all the isles of Scheldt; and more than all, the lovely Countess Gertrude had resolved to reward her Champion by giving him her hand, and the guardianship of her lands and her infant son.

And Hereward?

From him, or of him, there was no word. That he was alive and fighting was all the messenger could say.

Then Robert came back to Bruges, with a gallant retinue, leading home his bride. And there met him his father and mother, and his brother of Mons, and Richilda the beautiful and terrible sorceress—who had not yet stained her soul with those crimes which she expiated by fearful penances in after years, when

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young Arnoul, the son for whom she had sold her soul, lay dead upon the battlefield which was to have made him a mighty prince. And Torfrida went out with the nobles to meet Count Robert, and looked for Hereward, till her eyes were ready to fall out of her head. But Hereward was not with them.

"He must be left behind, commanding the army," thought she. "But he might have sent one word!"

There was a great feast that day, of course; and Torfrida sat thereat: but she could not eat. Nevertheless she was too proud to let the knights know what was in her heart; so she chatted and laughed as gaily as the rest, watching always for any word of Hereward. But none mentioned his name.

The feast was long; the ladies did not rise till nigh bedtime; and then the men drank on.

They went up to the Queen-Countess's chamber; where a solemn undressing of that royal lady usually took place.

The etiquette was this. The Queen-Countess sat in her chair of state in the midst, till her shoes were taken off, and her hair dressed for the night. Right and left of her, according to their degrees, sat the other great ladies; and behind each of them, where they could find places, the maidens.

It was Torfrida's turn to take off the royal shoes; and she advanced into the middle of the semicircle, slippers in hand.

"Stop there!" said the Countess-Queen.

Whereat Torfrida stopped, very much frightened.

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"Countesses and ladies," said the mistress, "There are, in Provence and the South, what I wish there were here in Flanders—Courts of Love, at which all offenders against the sacred laws of Venus and Cupid are tried by an assembly of their peers, and punished according to their deserts."

Torfrida turned scarlet.

"I know not why we, countesses and ladies, should have less knowledge of the laws of love than those gayer dames of the South, whose blood runs—to judge by her dark hair—in the veins of yon fair maid."

There was a silence. Torfrida was the most beautiful woman in the room; more beautiful than even Richilda the terrible; and therefore there were few but were glad to see her—as it seemed—in trouble.

Torfrida's mother began whimpering, and praying to six or seven saints at once. But nobody marked her—possibly not even the saints; being preoccupied with Torfrida.

"I hear, fair maid—for that you are that I will do you the justice to confess—that you are old enough to be married this four years since."

Torfrida stood like a stone, frightened out of her wits, plentiful as they were.

"Why are you not married?"

There was, of course, no answer.

"I hear that knights have fought for you; lost their lives for you."

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"I did not bid them," gasped Torfrida, longing that the floor would open and swallow up the Queen-Countess and all her kin and followers, as it did for the enemies of the blessed Saint Dunstan, while he was arguing with them in an upper room at Calne.

"And that the knight of St. Valery, to whom you gave your favour, now lies languishing of wounds got in your cause."

"I—I did not bid him fight," gasped Torfrida, now wishing that the floor would open and swallow up herself.

"And that he who overthrew the knight of St. Valery—to whom you gave that favour, and more——"

"I gave him nothing a maiden might not give," cried Torfrida, so fiercely that the Queen-Countess recoiled somewhat.

"I never said that you did, girl. Your love you gave him. Can you deny that?"

Torfrida laughed bitterly: her Southern blood was rising.

"I put my love out to nurse, instead of weaning it, as many a maiden has done before me, and thought no harm. When my love cried for hunger and cold, I took it back again to my own bosom: and whether it has lived or died there, is no one's matter but my own."

"Hunger and cold? I hear that him to whom you gave your love, you drove out to the cold, bidding him go fight in his bare shirt, if he wished to win your love."

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"I did not. He angered me—He——" and Torfrida found herself in the act of accusing Hereward.

She stopped instantly.

"What more, your Highness? If this be true, what more may not be true of such a one as I? I submit myself to your royal grace."

"She has confessed. What punishment, ladies, does she deserve? Or, rather, what punishment would her cousins of Provence inflict, did we send her southward, to be judged by their courts of love?"

One lady said one thing, one another. Some spoke cruelly; some worse than cruelly; for they were coarse ages, the ages of faith; and ladies said things then in open company which gentlemen would be ashamed to say in private now.

"Marry her to a fool," said Richilda, at last, bitterly.

"That is too common a misfortune," answered the lady of France. "If we did no more to her, she might grow as proud as her betters."

Adela knew that her daughter-in-law considered her husband a fool; and was somewhat of the same opinion, though she hated Richilda.

"No," said she; "we will do more. We will marry her to the first man who enters the castle."

Torfrida looked at her mistress to see if she were mad. But the Countess-Queen was serene and sane. Then Torfrida's Southern heat and Northern courage burst forth.

"You? marry? me? to?——" said she, slowly,

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with eyes so fierce and lips so livid, that Adela herself quailed.

There was a noise of shouting and laughing in the court below, which made all turn and listen.

The next moment a serving man came in, puzzled and inclined to laugh.

"May it please your Highness, here is the strangest adventure. There is ridden into the castle-yard a beggar-man with scarce a shirt to his back, on a great ugly mare with a foal running by her; and a fool behind him carrying lance and shield. And he says that he has come to fight any knight of the Court, ragged as he stands, for the fairest lady in the Court, be she who she may, if she have not a wedded husband already."

"And what says my Lord Marquis?"

"That it is a fair challenge and a good adventure; and that fight he shall, if any man will answer his defiance."

"And I say, tell my Lord Marquis that fight he shall not: for he shall have the fairest maiden in this Court for the trouble of carrying her away; and that I, Adela of France, will give her to him. So let that beggar dismount, and be brought up hither to me."

There was silence again. Torfrida looked round her once more to see whether or not she was dreaming, and whether there was one human being to whom she could appeal. Her mother sat praying and weeping in a corner. Torfrida looked at her with one glance of scorn. which she confessed and repented,

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with bitter tears, many a year after, in a foreign land; and then turned to bay with the spirit of her old Paladin ancestor, who choked the Emir at Montmajour.

Married to a beggar! it was a strange accident; and an ugly one; and a great cruelty and wrong. But it was not impossible, hardly improbable, in days when the caprice of the strong created accidents, and when cruelty and wrong went for nothing, even with very kindly honest folk. So Torfrida faced the danger, as she would have faced that of a kicking horse or a flooded ford; and like the nut-brown bride,

> She pulled out a little penknife,
> That was both keen and sharp,"

and considered that the beggarman could wear no armour, and that she wore none either. For if she succeeded in slaying that beggarman, she might need to slay herself after, to avoid being—according to the fashion of those days—burnt alive.

So when the arras was drawn back, and that beggarman came into the room, instead of shrieking, fainting, hiding, or turning, she made three steps straight toward him, looking him in the face like a wild cat at bay. Then she threw up her arms; and fell upon his neck.

It was Hereward himself. Filthy, ragged: but Hereward.

His shirt was brown with gore, and torn with wounds; and through its rents showed more than one hardly healed scar. His hair and beard were all in

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elf-locks; and one heavy cut across the head had shorn not only hair, but brain-pan, very close.

But Hereward it was; and regardless of all beholders, she lay upon his neck, and never stirred nor spoke.

"I call you to witness, ladies," cried the Queen-Countess, "that I am guiltless. She has given herself to this beggarman of her own free will. What say you?" And she turned to Torfrida's mother.

Torfrida's mother only prayed and whimpered.

"Countesses and Ladies," said the Queen-Countess, "There will be two weddings to-morrow. The first will be that of my son Robert and my pretty Lady Gertrude here. The second will be that of my pretty Torfrida and Hereward."

"And the second bride," said the Countess Gertrude, rising and taking Torfrida in her arms, "will be ten times prettier than the first. There, sir, I have done all you asked of me. Now go and wash yourself."

. . . . . .

"Hereward," said Torfrida, a week after, "and did you really never change your shirt all that time?"

"Never. I kept my promise."

"But it must have been very nasty."

"Well, I bathed now and then."

"But it must have been very cold."

"I am warm enough now."

"But did you never comb your hair, neither?"

"Well, I won't say that. Travellers find strange

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bedfellows. But I had half a mind never to do it at all, just to spite you."

"And what matter would it have been to me?"

"Oh! none. It is only a Danish fashion we have of keeping clean."

"Clean! You were dirty enough when you came home. How silly you were! If you had sent me but one word!"

"You would have fancied me beaten, and scolded me all over again. I know your ways now, Torfrida."

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CHAPTER XV.

HOW EARL TOSTI GODWINSSON CAME TO ST. OMER.

THE winter passed in sweet madness; and for the first time in her life, Torfrida regretted the lengthening of the days, and the flowering of the primroses, and the return of the now needless wryneck; for they warned her that Hereward must forth to the wars in Scaldmariland, which had broken out again, as was to be expected, as soon as Count Robert and his bride had turned their backs.

And Hereward, likewise, for the first time in his life, was loth to go to war. He was, doubtless, rich enough in this world's goods. Torfrida herself was rich, and seems to have had the disposal of her own property; for her mother is not mentioned in connection therewith. Hereward seems to have dwelt in her house at St. Omer as long as he remained in Flanders. He had probably amassed some treasure of his own by the simple, but then most aristocratic, method of plunder. He had, too, probably, grants of land in Holland from the Frison, the rents whereof were not paid as regularly as might be. Moreover, as "*Magiste. Militum*," "Master of the Knights," he

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had, it is likely, pay as well as honour. And he approved himself worthy of his good fortune. He kept forty gallant housecarles in his hall all the winter, and Torfrida and her lasses made and mended their clothes. He gave large gifts to the Abbey of St. Bertin; and had masses sung for the souls of all whom he had slain, according to a rough list which he furnished,—bidding the monks not to be chary of two or three masses extra at times, as his memory was short, and he might have sent more souls to purgatory than he had recollected. He gave great alms at his door to all the poor. He befriended, especially, all shipwrecked and needy mariners, feeding and clothing them, and begging their freedom as a gift from Baldwin. He feasted the knights of the neighbourhood, who since his Baresark campaign, had all vowed him the most gallant of warriors, and since his accession of wealth, the most courteous of gentlemen; and all went merrily, as it is written, "As long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak well of thee."

So he would have fain stayed at home at St. Omer: but he was Robert's man, and his good friend likewise; and to the wars he must go forth once more; and for eight or nine weary months Torfrida was alone; but very happy, for a certain reason of her own.

At last the short November days came round; and a joyful woman was fair Torfrida, when Martin Lightfoot ran into the hall, and throwing himself down on

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the rushes like a dog, announced that Hereward and his men would be home before noon, and then fell fast asleep.

There was bustling to and fro of her and her maids; decking of the hall in the best hangings; strewing of fresh rushes, to the dislodgement of Martin; setting out of boards and trestles, and stoops and mugs thereon; cooking of victuals, broaching of casks; and, above all, for Hereward's self, heating of much water, and setting out, in the inner chamber, of the great bath-tub and bath-sheet, which was the special delight of a hero fresh from war.

And by mid-day the streets of St. Omer rang with clank, and tramp, and trumpet-blare, and in marched Hereward and all his men, and swung round through the gateway into the court, where Torfrida stood to welcome them, as fair as day, a silver stirrup-cup in her hand. And while the men were taking off their harness and dressing their horses, she and Hereward went in together, and either took such joy of the other, that a year's parting was forgot in a minute's meeting.

"Now!" cried she, in a tone half of triumph, half of tenderness; "look there!"

"A cradle? And a baby?"

"Your baby."

"Is it a boy?" asked Hereward, who saw in his mind's eye a thing which would grow and broaden at his knee year by year, and learn from him to ride, to shoot, to fight. "Happy for him if he does not learn

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worse from me," thought Hereward, with a sudden movement of humility and contrition, which was surely marked in heaven; for Torfrida marked it on earth.

But she mistook its meaning.

"Do not be vexed. It is a girl."

"Never mind." As if it was a calamity over which he was bound to comfort the mother. "If she is half as beautiful as you look at this moment, what splintering of lances there will be about her! How jolly, to see the lads hewing at each other, while our daughter sits in the pavilion, as Queen of Love!"

Torfrida laughed. "You think of nothing but fighting, bear of the North Seas."

"Every one to his trade. Well, yes, I am glad that it is a girl."

"I thought you seemed vexed. Why did you cross yourself?"

"Because I thought to myself, how unfit I was to bring up a boy to be such a knight as—as you would have him;—how likely I was, ere all was over, to make him as great a ruffian as myself."

"Hereward! Hereward!" and she threw her arms round his neck for the tenth time. "Blessed be you for those words! Those are the fears which never come true, for they bring down from heaven the grace of God, to guard the humble and contrite heart from that which it fears."

"Ah, Torfrida, I wish I were as good as you!"

"Now—my joy and my life, my hero and my scald

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—I have great news for you, as well as a little baby. News from England."

"You, and a baby over and above, are worth all England to me."

"But listen. Edward the king is dead."

"Then there is one fool less on earth; and one saint more, I suppose, in heaven."

"And Harold Godwinsson is king in his stead. And he has married your niece Aldytha, and sworn friendship with her brothers."

"I expected no less. Well, every dog has his day."

"And his will be a short one. William of Normandy has sworn to drive him out."

"Then he will do it. And so the poor little Swanneck is packed into a convent, that the houses of Godwin and Leofric may rush into each other's arms, and perish together! Fools, fools, fools! I will hear no more of such a mad world. My queen, tell me about your sweet self. What is all this to me? Am I not a wolf's head, and a landless man?"

"Oh my king, have not the stars told me that you will be an earl and a ruler of men, when all your foes are wolves' heads as you are now? And the weird is coming true already. Tosti Godwinsson is in the town at this moment, an outlaw and a wolf's head himself!"

Hereward laughed a great laugh.

"Aha! Every man to his right place at last. Tell me about that, for it will amuse me. I have

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heard nought of him since he sent the king his Hereford thralls' arms and legs in the pickle-barrels; to show him, he said, that there was plenty of cold meat on his royal demesnes."

"You have not heard, then, how he murdered in his own chamber at York, Gamel Ormsson and Ulf Dolfinsson?"

"That poor little lad? Well, a gracious youth was Tosti, ever since he went to kill his brother Harold with teeth and claws, like a wolf; and as he grows in years, he grows in grace. But what said Ulf's father and the Gospatrics?"

"They were I know not where. But old Gospatric came down to Westminster, to demand law for his grandnephew's blood."

"A silly thing of the old Thane, to walk into the wolf's den."

"And so he found. He was stabbed there, three days after Christmas-tide, and men say that Queen Edith did it, for love of Tosti, her brother. Then Dolphin and the Gospatrics took to the sea, and away to Scotland; and so Tosti rid himself of all the good blood in the North, except young Waltheof Siwardsson, whose turn, I fear, will come next.

"How comes he here, then?"

"The Northern men rose at that, killed his servant at York; took all his treasures; and marched down to Northampton, plundering and burning. They would have marched on London town, if Harold had not met them there from the king. There they cried out

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against Tosti, and all his taxes, and his murders, and his changing Canute's laws, and would have your nephew Morcar for their earl. A tyrant they would not endure. Free they were born and bred, they said, and free they would live and die. Harold must needs do justice, even on his own brother."

"Especially when he knows that that brother is his worst foe."

"Harold is a better man than you take him for, my Hereward. But be that as it may, Morcar is earl; and Tosti outlawed, and here in St. Omer, with wife and child."

"My nephew Earl of Northumbria! As I might have been, if I had been a wiser man."

"If you had, you would never have found me."

"True, my queen! They say heaven tempers the wind to the shorn lamb; but it tempers it too, sometimes, to the hobbled ass; and so it has done by me. And so the rogues have fallen out, and honest men may come by their own. For as the Northern men have done by one brother, so will the Eastern men do by the other. Let Harold see how many of those fat Lincolnshire manors, which he has seized into his own hands, he holds by this day twelve months. But what is all this to me, my queen, while you and I can kiss, and laugh the world to scorn?"

"This to you, beloved, that, great as you are, Torfrida must have you greater still; and out of all this coil and confusion you may win something, if you be wise."

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"Sweet lips, be still; and let us play instead of plotting."

"And this, too—you shall not stop my mouth—that Harold Godwinsson has sent a letter to you."

"Harold Godwinsson is my very good lord," sneered Hereward.

"And this it said, with such praises and courtesies concerning you, as made my wife's heart beat high with pride—'If Hereward Leofricsson will come home to England, he shall have his rights in law again, and his manors in Lincolnshire, and a thaneship in East Anglia, and manors for his men-at arms; and if that be not enough, he shall have an earldom, as soon as there is one to give.'"

"And what says to that, Torfrida, Hereward's queen?"

"You will not be angry if I answered the letter for you?"

"If you answered it one way—no. If another—yes."

Torfrida trembled. Then she looked Hereward full in the face with her keen clear eyes.

"Now shall I see whether I have given myself to Hereward in vain, body and soul, or whether I have trained him to be my true and perfect knight."

"You answered, then," said Hereward, "thus——"

"Say on," said she, turning her face away again.

"Hereward Leofricsson tells Harold Godwinsson that he is his equal, and not his man; and that he will never put his hands between the hands of a

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son of Godwin. An Etheling born, a king of the house of Cerdic, outlawed him from his right, and none but an Etheling born shall give him his right again."

"I said it, I said it. Those were my very words!" and Torfrida burst into tears, while Hereward kissed her, almost fawned upon her, calling her his queen, his saga-wife, his guardian angel.

"I was sorely tempted," sobbed she. "Sorely. To see you rich and proud upon your own lands, an earl, may be—may be, I thought at whiles, a king. But it could not be. It did not stand with honour, my hero—not with honour."

"Not with honour. Get me gay garments out of the chest, and let us go in royally, and royally feast my jolly riders."

"Stay awhile," said she, kissing his head as she combed and curled his long golden locks, and her own raven ones, hardly more beautiful, fell over them and mingled with them. "Stay awhile, my pride. There is another spell in the wind, stirred up by devil or witch-wife, and it comes from Tosti Godwinsson."

"Tosti, the cold-meat butcher! What has he to say to me?"

"This—'If Hereward will come with me to William of Normandy, and help us against Harold the perjured, then will William do for him all that Harold would have done, and more beside.'"

"And what answered Torfrida?"

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"It was not so said to me that I could answer. I had it by a side wind, through the Countess Judith."[1]

"And she had it from her sister Matilda."

"And she, of course, from Duke William himself."

"And what would you have answered, if you had answered, pretty one?"

"Nay, I know not. I cannot be always queen. You must be king sometimes."

Torfrida did not say that this latter offer had been a much sorer temptation than the former.

"And has not the base-born Frenchman enough knights of his own, that he needs the help of an outlaw like me!"

"He asks for help from all the ends of the earth. He has sent that Lanfranc to the Pope; and there is talk of a sacred banner, and a crusade against England."

"The monks are with him, then?" said Hereward. "That is one more count in their score. But I am no monk. I have shorn many a crown, but I have kept my own hair as yet, you see."

"I do see," said she, playing with his locks. "But —but he wants you. He has sent for Angevins, Poitevins, Bretons, Flemings—promising lands, rank, money, what not. Tosti is recruiting for him here in Flanders now. He will soon be off to the Orkneys, I suspect, or to Sweyn in Denmark, after Vikings."

"Here? Has Baldwin promised him men?"

[1] Tosti's wife, Earl Baldwin's daughter, sister of Matilda, William the Conqueror's wife.

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"What could the good old man do? He could not refuse his own son-in-law. This, at least, I know, that a messenger has gone off to Scotland, to Gilbert of Ghent, to bring or send any bold Flemings who may prefer fat England to lean Scotland."

"Lands, rank, money, eh? So he intends that the war should pay itself—out of English purses. What answer would you have me make to that, wife mine?"

"The Duke is a terrible man. What if he conquers? And conquer he will."

"Is that written in your stars?"

"It is, I fear. And if he have the Pope's blessing, and the Pope's banner—— Dare we resist the Holy Father?"

"Holy stepfather, you mean; for a stepfather he seems to prove to merry England. But do you really believe that an old man down in Italy can make a bit of rag conquer by saying a few prayers at it? If I am to believe in a magic flag, give me Harold Hardraade's Landcyda, at least, with Harold and his Norsemen behind it."

"William's French are as good as those Norsemen, man for man; and horsed withal, Hereward."

"That may be," said he, half testily, with a curse on the tanner's grandson and his French popinjays, "and our Englishmen are as good as any two Norsemen, as the Norse themselves say." He could not divine, and Torfrida hardly liked to explain to him, the glamour which the Duke of Normandy had cast over her, as the representative of chivalry, learning,

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civilisation, a new and nobler life for men than the world had yet seen; one which seemed to connect the young races of Europe with the wisdom of the ancients and the magic glories of old Imperial Rome.

"You are not fair to that man," said she, after awhile. "Hereward, Hereward, have I not told you how, though body be strong, mind is stronger? That is what that man knows; and therefore he has prospered. Therefore his realms are full of wise scholars, and thriving schools, and fair minsters, and his men are sober, and wise, and learned like clerks——"

"And false like clerks, as he is himself. Schoolcraft and honesty never went yet together, Torfrida——"

"Not in me?"

"You are not a clerk: you are a woman, and more than woman; you are an elf, a goddess; there is none like you. But hearken to me. This man is false. All the world knows it."

"He promises, they say, to govern England justly as King Edward's heir, according to the old laws and liberties of the realm."

"Of course. If he does not come as the old monk's heir, how does he come at all? If he does not promise our—their, I mean, for I am no Englishman—laws and liberties, who will join him? But his riders and hirelings will not fight for nothing. They must be paid with English land, and English land they will have, for they will be his men, whoever else are not. They will be his darlings, his housecarles, his hawks to sit on his fist and fly at his game; and

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English bones will be picked clean to feed them. And you would have me help to do that, Torfrida? Is that the honour of which you spoke so boldly to Harold Godwinsson?"

Torfrida was silent. To have brought Hereward under the influence of William was an old dream of hers. And yet she was proud at the dream being broken thus. And so she said—

"You are right! It is better for you—it is better than to be William's darling, and the greatest earl in his court—to feel that you are still an Englishman. Promise me but one thing, that you will make no fierce or desperate answer to the Duke."

"And why not answer the tanner as he deserves?"

"Because my art, and my heart too, tells me that your fortunes and his are linked together. I have studied my tables, but they would not answer. Then I cast lots in Virgilius——"

"And what found you there?" asked he, anxiously.

"I opened at the lines—

" ' Pacem me exanimis et Martis sorte peremptis,
Oratis? Equidem et vivis concedere vellem.' "

"And what means that?"

"That you may have to pray him to pity the slain; and have for answer, that their lands may be yours if you will but make peace with him. At least, do not break hopelessly with that man. Above all, never use that word concerning him which you used just now; the word which he never forgives. Remember what he did to them of Alençon, when they hung raw

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hides over the wall, and cried, 'Plenty of work for the tanner!'"

"Let him pick out the prisoners' eyes, and chop off their hands, and shoot them into the town from mangonels. I know him: but he must go far and thrive well ere I give him a chance of doing that by the Wake."

"Hereward, Hereward, my own! Boast not, but fear God. Who knows, in such a world as this, to what end we may come? Night after night I am haunted with spectres, eyeless, handless——"

"This is cold comfort for a man just out of hard fighting in the ague-fens!"

She threw her arms round him, and held him as if she would never let him go.

"When you die, I die. And you will not die: you will be great and glorious, and your name will be sung by scald and minstrel through many a land, far and wide. Only, be not rash. Be not high-minded. Promise me to answer this man wisely. The more crafty he is, the more crafty must you be likewise."

"Let us tell this mighty hero then," said Hereward, trying to laugh away her fears—and perhaps his own, "that while he has the Holy Father on his side, he can need no help from a poor sinful worm like me."

"Hereward, Hereward!"

"Why, is there aught about hides in that?"

"I want—I want an answer which may not cut off all hope in case of the worst."

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"Then let us say boldly, 'On the day that William is King of all England, Hereward will come and put his hands between his, and be his man.'"

That message was sent to William at Rouen. He laughed—

"It is a fair challenge from a valiant man. The day shall come when I will claim it."

Tosti and Hereward passed that winter in St. Omer. living in the same street, passing each other day by day, and never spoke a word one to the other.

Robert the Frison heard of it, and tried to persuade Hereward.

"Let him purge himself of the murder of Ulf the boy, son of my friend Dolfin; and after that of Gamel, son of Orm; and after that again of Gospatric, my father's friend, whom his sister slew for his sake; and then an honest man may talk with him. Were he not my good Lord's brother-in-law, as he is, more's the pity, I would challenge him to fight *à l'outrance*, with any weapons he might choose."

"Heaven protect him in that case," quoth Robert the Frison.

"As it is, I will keep the peace. And I will see that my men keep the peace, though there are Scarborough and Bamborough lads among them, who long to cut his throat upon the streets. But more I will not do."

So Tosti sulked through the winter at St. Omer. Suddenly he turned traitor (no man knows why) to his good brother-in-law and new ally, William of Nor-

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mandy; and went off to get help from Sweyn of Denmark, and, failing that, from Harold Hardraade of Norway. But how he sped there must be read in the words of a cunninger saga-man than this chronicler, even in those of the Icelandic Homer, Snorro Sturleson.

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CHAPTER XVI.

HOW HEREWARD WAS ASKED TO SLAY AN OLD COMRADE.

In those days Hereward went into Bruges, to Marquis Baldwin, about his business. And as he walked in Bruges street, he met an old friend, Gilbert of Ghent.

He had grown somewhat stouter, and somewhat greyer, in the last ten years: but he was as hearty as ever, and as honest, according to his own notions of honesty.

He shook Hereward by both hands, clapt him on the back, swore with many oaths, that he had heard of his fame in all lands, that he always said that he would turn out a champion, and a gallant knight, and had said it long before he killed the bear. As for killing it, it was no more than he expected, and nothing to what Hereward had done since, and would do yet.

Wherefrom Hereward opined that Gilbert had need of him.

They chatted on: Hereward asking after old friends, and sometimes after old foes, whom he had long since forgiven; for though he always avenged an injury, he

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never bore malice for one: a distinction less common now than then, when a man's honour, as well as his safety, depended on his striking again, when he was struck.

"And how is little Alftruda?—Big she must be now?" asked he at last.

"The fiend fly away with her—or rather, would that he had flown away with her, before ever I saw the troublesome jade. Big? She is grown into the most beautiful lass that ever was seen—which is, what a young fellow, like you, cares for; and more trouble to me than all my money, which is what an old fellow, like me, cares for. It is partly about her that I am over here now. Fool that I was, ever to let a Princess into my house!" and Gilbert swore a great deal.

"How was she a Princess? I forget," said Hereward, who cared nothing about the matter. "And how came she into your house? I never could understand that, any more than how the bear came there."

"Ah! As to the bear, I have my secrets, which I tell no one. He is dead and buried, thanks to you."

"And I sleep on his skin every night."

"You do, my little Champion? Well—warm is the bed that is well earned. But as for her;—see here, and I'll tell you. She was Gospatric's ward, and kinswoman—how, I do not rightly know. But this I know, that she comes from Uchtred, the earl whom Canute slew, and that she is heir to great estates in Northumberland."

"Gospatric, that fought at Dunsinane?"

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"Yes; not the old Thane, his uncle, whom Tosti has murdered: but Gospatric, King Malcolm's cousin, Dolfin's father. Well, she was his ward. He gave me her to keep, for he wanted her out of harm's way —the lass having a bonny dower, lands, and money— till he could marry her up to one of his sons. I took her: but of course I was not going to do other men's work for nought; so I would have married her up to my poor boy, if he had but lived. But he would not live, as you know. Then I would have married her to you, and made you my heir, I tell you honestly, if you had not flown off, like a hot-headed young springald as you were then."

"You were very kind. But how is she a Princess?"

"Princess? Twice over. Her father was of high blood among the Saxons; and if not, are not all the Gospatrics Ethelings? Their grandmother, Uchtred's wife, was Ethelred Evil-Counsel's daughter; and I have heard that this girl's grandfather was his son— —but died young—or was killed. Who cares?"

"Not I," quoth Hereward.

"Well—Gospatric wants to marry her to Dolfin, his eldest son."

"Why, Dolfin had a wife when I was at Dunsinane."

"But she is dead since, and young Ulf, her son, was murdered by Tosti last winter."

"I know."

"Whereon Gospatric sends to me for the girl and her dowry. What was I to do? Give her up? Little

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it is, lad, that I ever gave up, after I had it once in my grip, or I should be a poorer man than I am now. Have and hold, is my rule. What should I do? What I did. I was coming hither on business of my own, so I put her on board ship, and half her dower —where the other half is, I know; and man must draw me with wild horses, before he finds out:—and came here to my kinsman, Baldwin, to see if he had any proper young fellow to whom we might marry the lass, and so go shares in her money and the family connection. Could a man do more wisely?"

"Impossible," quoth Hereward.

"But see how a wise man is lost by fortune. When I come here, whom should I find but Dolfin himself? The rogue had scent of my plan, all the way from Dolfinston there, by Peebles. He hunts me out, the hungry Scotch wolf: rides for Leith, takes ship, and is here to meet me, having accused me before Baldwin as a robber and a ravisher, and offered to prove his right to the jade on my body in single combat."

"The villain!" quoth Hereward. "There is no modesty left on earth, nor prudence either. To come here, where he might have stumbled on Tosti, who murdered his son, and who would surely do the like by him himself. Lucky for him that Tosti is off to Norway on his own errand."

"Modesty and prudence! None nowadays, young sire; nor justice either, I think; for when Baldwin hears us both—and I told my story as cannily as I could—he tells me that he is very sorry for an old

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vassal and kinsman, and so forth,—but I must either disgorge or fight."

"Then fight," quoth Hereward.

"Per se aut per campionem—that's the old law, you know."

"Not a doubt of it."

"Look you, Hereward. I am no coward, nor a clumsy man of my hands."

"He is either fool or liar who says so."

"But see. I find it hard work to hold my own in Scotland now. Folks don't like me, or trust me; I can't say why."

"How unreasonable!" quoth Hereward.

"And if I kill this youth, and so have a blood-feud with Gospatric, I have a hornet's nest about my ears. Not only he and his sons—who are masters of Scotch Northumberland[1]—but all his cousins—King Malcolm, and Donaldbain, and, for aught I know, Harold and the Godwinssons, if he bid them take up the quarrel. And beside, that Dolfin is a big man. If you cross Scot and Saxon, you breed a very big man. If you cross again with a Dane or a Norseman, you breed a giant. His grandfather was a Scots prince, his grandmother an English Princess, his mother a Norse Princess, as you know—and how big he is, you should remember. He weighs half as much again as I, and twice as much as you."

"Butchers count by weight, and knights by courage," quoth Hereward.

[1] Between Tweed and Forth.

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"Very well for you, who are young and active: but I take him to be a better man than that Ogre of Cornwall, whom they say you killed."

"What care I? Let him be twice as good, I'd try him."

"Ah! I knew you were the old Hereward still. Now hearken to me. Be my champion. You owe me a service, lad. Fight that man. Challenge him in open field. Kill him, as you are sure to do. Claim the lass, and win her—and then we will part her dower. And (though it is little that I care for young lasses' fancies), to tell you truth, she never favoured any man but you."

Hereward started at the snare which had been laid for him; and then fell into a very great laughter.

"My most dear and generous host: you are the wiser, the older you grow. A plan worthy of Solomon! You are rid of Sieur Dolfin without any blame to yourself."

"Just so."

"While I win the lass; and, living here in Flanders, am tolerably safe from any blood-feud of the Gospatrics."

"Just so."

"Perfect: but there is only one small hindrance to the plan; and that is—that I am married already."

Gilbert stopped short, and swore a great oath.

"But," he said after a while, "does that matter so much after all?"

"Very little, indeed, as all the world knows, if one has money enough, and power enough."

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"And you have both, they say."

"But, still more unhappily, my money is my wife's."

"Peste!"

"And more unhappily still, I am so foolishly fond of her, that I would sooner have her in her smock, than any other woman with half England for a dower."

"Then I suppose I must look out for another champion."

"Or save yourself the trouble, by being—just as a change—an honest man."

"I believe you are right," said Gilbert, laughing; "but it is hard to begin so late in life."

"And after one has had so little practice."

"Aha! Thou art the same merry dog of a Hereward. Come along. But could we not poison this Dolfin, after all?"

To which proposal Hereward gave no encouragement.

"And now, my très beau sire, may I ask you, in return, what business brings you to Flanders?"

"Have I not told you?"

"No, but I have guessed. Gilbert of Ghent is on his way to William of Normandy."

"Well. Why not?"

"Why not?—certainly. And has brought out of Scotland a few gallant gentlemen, and stout housecarles of my acquaintance."

Gilbert laughed.

"You may well say that. To tell you the truth,

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we have flitted, bag and baggage. I don't believe that we have left a dog behind."

"So you intend to 'colonise' in England, as the learned clerks would call it? To settle; to own land; and enter, like the Jews of old, into goodly houses which you builded not, farms which you tilled not, wells which you digged not, and orchards which you planted not?"

"Why, what a learned clerk you are yourself! That sounds like Scripture."

"And so it is. I heard it in a French priest's sermon which he preached here in St. Omer a Sunday or two back, exhorting all good Catholics, in the Pope's name, to enter upon the barbarous land of England, tainted with the sin of Simon Magus, and expel thence the heretical priests, and so forth; promising them that they should have free leave to cut long thongs out of other men's hides."

Gilbert chuckled.

"You laugh. The priest did not; for after sermon I went up to him, and told him how I was an Englishman, and an outlaw, and a desperate man, who feared neither saint nor devil; and if I heard such talk as that again in St. Omer, I would so shave the speaker's crown that he should never need razor to his dying day."

"And what is that to me?" said Gilbert, in an uneasy, half-defiant tone; for Hereward's tone had been more than half-defiant.

"This. That there are certain broad lands in

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England, which were my father's, and are now my nephews' and my mother's, and some which should of right be mine. And I advise you, as a friend, not to make entry on those lands, lest Hereward in turn make entry on you. And who is he that will deliver you out of my hand?"

"God and His Saints alone, thou fiend out of the pit," quoth Gilbert laughing. But he was growing warm, and began to tutoyer Hereward.

"I am in earnest, Gilbert of Ghent, my good friend of old time."

"I know thee well enough, man. Why, in the name of all glory and plunder, art thou not coming with us? They say William has offered thee the earldom of Northumberland."

"He has not. And if he had, it is not his to give. And if it were, it is by right neither mine, nor my nephews', but Waltheof Siwardsson's. Now hearken unto me; and settle it in your minds, thou and William both, that your quarrel is against none but Harold and the Godwinssons, and their men of Wessex: but that if you go to cross the Watling Street, and meddle with the free Danes, who are none of Harold's men——"

"Stay. Harold has large manors in Lincolnshire, and so has Edith his sister, and what of them, Sieur Hereward?"

"That the man who touches them, even though the men on them may fight on Harold's side, had better have put his head into a hornet's nest. Unjustly were

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they seized from their true owners by Harold and his fathers; and the holders of them will owe no service to him a day longer than they can help: but will, if he fall, demand an Earl of their own race, or fight to the death."

"Best make young Waltheof Earl, then."

"Best keep thy foot out of them, and the foot of any man for whom thou carest. Now good-bye. Friends we are, and friends let us be."

"Ah, that thou wert coming to England!"

"I bide my time. Come I may, when I see fit. But whether I come as friend or foe, depends on that of which I have given thee fair warning."

So they parted for the time.

It will be seen hereafter, how Gilbert took his own advice about young Waltheof: but did not take Hereward's advice about the Lincoln manors.

In Baldwin's hall that day, Hereward met Dolfin; and when the magnificent young Scot sprang to him, embraced him, bewailed his murdered boy, talked over old passages, complimented him on his fame, lamented that he himself had won no such honours in the field, Hereward felt much more inclined to fight for him than against him.

Presently the ladies entered from the bower adjoining the hall. A buzz of expectation rose from all the knights, and Alftruda's name was whispered round.

She came in; and Hereward saw at the first glance, that Gilbert had for once in his life spoken truth. So beautiful a damsel he had never beheld; and as she

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swept down toward him, he for one moment forgot Torfrida, and stood spell-bound like the rest.

Her eye caught his. If his face showed recognition, hers showed none. The remembrance of their early friendship, of her deliverance from the monster, had plainly passed away.

"Fickle, ungrateful things, these women," thought Hereward.

She passed him close. As she did so, she turned her head, and looked him full in the face one moment, haughty and cold.

"So you could not wait for me?" said she, in a quiet whisper, and went on straight to Dolfin, who stood trembling with expectation and delight.

She put her hand into his.

"Here stands my champion," said she.

"Say, here kneels your slave," cried the Scot, dropping to the pavement a true Highland knee. Whereon forth twanged a harp, and Dolfin's minstrel sang, in most melodious Gaelic—

"Strong as a horse's hock, shaggy as a stag's brisket,
Is the knee of the young torrent-leaper, the pride of the house of Crinan.
It bent not to Macbeth the accursed, it bends not even to Malcolm the Anointed,
But it bends like a harebell—who shall blame it?—before the breath of beauty."

Which magnificent effusion being interpreted by Hereward for the instruction of the ladies, procured for the red-headed bard more than one handsome gift.

A sturdy voice arose out of the crowd.

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"The lady, my Lord Marquis, and knights all, will need no champion as far as I am concerned. When one sees so fair a pair together, what can a knight say, in the name of all knighthood, but that the heavens have made them for each other, and that it were sin and shame to sunder them?"

The voice was that of Gilbert of Ghent, who, making a virtue of necessity, walked up to the pair, his weather-beaten countenance wreathed into what were meant for paternal smiles.

"Why did you not say as much in Scotland, and save me all this trouble?" pertinently asked the plain-spoken Scot.

"My Lord Prince, you owe me a debt for my caution. Without it, the fair lady had never known the whole fervency of your love; nor these noble knights and yourself the whole evenness of Count Baldwin's justice."

Alftruda turned her head away half contemptuously; and as she did so, she let her hand drop listlessly from Dolfin's grasp, and drew back to the other ladies.

A suspicion crossed Hereward's mind. Did she really love the Prince? Did those strange words of hers mean that she had not yet forgotten Hereward himself?

However, he said to himself that it was no concern of his, as it certainly was not: went home to Torfrida, told her everything that had happened; laughed over it with her; and then forgot Alftruda, Dolfin, and Gilbert, in the prospect of a great campaign in Holland.

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CHAPTER XVII.

HOW HEREWARD TOOK THE NEWS FROM STANFORD-BRIGG AND HASTINGS.

AFTER that, news came thick and fast.

News of all the fowl of heaven flocking to the feast of the great God, that they might eat the flesh of kings, and captains, and mighty men, and horses, and them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both bond and free.

News true, news half-true, news false. News from Rome, how England, when conquered, was to be held as a fief of St. Peter, and spiritually, as well as temporarily, enslaved. News how the Gonfanon of St. Peter, and a ring with a bit of St. Peter himself enclosed therein, had come to Rouen, to go before the Norman host as the Ark went before that of Israel.

Then news from the North. How Tosti had been to Sweyn, and bid him come back and win the country again, as Canute his uncle had done; and how the cautious Dane had answered that he was a much smaller man than Canute; that he had enough to hold his own against the Norsemen, and could not afford to throw for such high stakes as his mighty uncle.

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Then news how Tosti had been to Norway, to Harold Hardraade, and asked him why he had been fighting fifteen years for Denmark, when England lay open to him. And how Harold of Norway had agreed to come; and how he had levied one-half of the able-bodied men in Norway; and how he was gathering a mighty fleet at Solundir, in the mouth of the Sogne Fiord. Of all this Hereward was well informed; for Tosti came back again to St. Omer, and talked big. But Hereward and he had no dealings with each other. But at last, when Tosti tried to entice some of Hereward's men to sail with him, Hereward sent him word that if he met him, he would kill him in the streets.

Then Tosti, who (though he wanted not for courage) knew that he was no match for Hereward, went off to Bruges, leaving his wife and family behind; gathered sixty ships at Ostend; went off to the Isle of Wight; and forced the landsfolk to give him money and food. Then Harold of England's fleet, which was watching the coast against the Normans, drove him away; and he sailed off north, full of black rage against his brother Harold and all Englishmen, and burned, plundered, and murdered, along the coast of Lincolnshire, out of brute spite to the Danes who had expelled him.

Then came news how he had got into the Humber; how Morcar and Edwin with the Northumbrians had driven him out; and how he had gone off to Scotland to meet Harold of Norway; and how he had put his hands between Harold's, and become his man.

And all the while the Norman camp at St. Pierre-

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sur-Dive grew and grew; and all was ready, if the wind would but change.

And so Hereward looked on, helpless, and saw these two great storm-clouds growing—one from north and one from south—to burst upon his native land.

Two invasions at the same moment of time; and these no mere Viking raids for plunder, but deliberate attempts at conquest and colonisation, by the two most famous captains of the age. What if both succeeded? What if the two storm-clouds swept across England, each on its own path, and met in the midst, to hurl their lightnings into each other? A fight between William of Normandy and Harold of Norway, on some moorland in Mercia—that would be a battle of giants; a sight at which Odin and the gods of Valhalla would rise from their seats, and throw away the mead-horn, to stare down on the deeds of heroes scarcely less mighty than themselves. Would that neither might win! Would that they would destroy and devour, till there was none left of Frenchmen or of Norwegians!

So sung Hereward, after his heathen fashion: and his housecarles applauded the song. But Torfrida shuddered.

"And what will become of the poor English in the meantime?"

"They have brought it on themselves," said Hereward, bitterly. "Instead of giving the crown to the man who should have had it—to Sweyn of Denmark—

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—they let Godwin put it on the head of a drivelling monk: and as they sowed, so will they reap."

But Hereward's own soul was black within him. To see these mighty events passing, as it were, within reach of his hand—and he unable to take his share in them—For what share could he take! That of Tosti Godwinsson against his own nephews! That of Harold Godwinsson, the usurper? That of the tanner's grandson against any man? Ah, that he had been in England! Ah, that he had been, where he might have been, where he ought to have been, but for his own folly—high in power in his native land; perhaps a great earl; perhaps commander of all the armies of the Danelagh. And bitterly he cursed his youthful sins, as he rode to and fro almost daily to the port, asking for news, and getting often only too much.

For now came news that the Norsemen had landed in Humber; that Edwin and Morcar were beaten at York; that Hardraade and Tosti were masters of the North.

And with that, news that by the virtue of the relics of St. Valery, which had been brought out of their shrine to frighten the demons of the storm, and by the intercession of the blessed St. Michael, patron of Normandy, the winds had changed, and William's whole armament had crossed the Channel, landed upon an undefended shore, and fortified themselves at Pevensey and Hastings.

And then followed a fortnight of silence and torturing suspense.

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Hereward could hardly eat, drink, sleep, or speak. He answered Torfrida's consolations curtly and angrily, till she betook herself to silent caresses, as to a sick animal. But she loved him all the better for his sullenness; for it showed that his English heart was wakening again, sound and strong.

At last news came. He was down as usual, at the port. A ship had just come up the estuary. A man just landed stood on the beach, gesticulating, and calling in an unknown tongue to the bystanders, who laughed at him, and seemed inclined to misuse him.

Hereward galloped down the beach.

"Out of the way, villains! Why, man, you are a Norseman!"

"Norseman am I, Jarl; Thord Gunlaugsson is my name; and news I bring for the Countess Judith (as the French call her) that shall turn her golden hair to snow:—yea, and all fair lasses' hair from Lindesness to Loffoden."

"Is the Earl dead?"

"And Harold Sigurdsson."

Hereward sat silent, appalled. For Tosti he cared not. But Harold Sigurdsson, Harold Hardraade, Harold the Viking, Harold the Varanger, Harold the Lionslayer, Harold of Constantinople, the bravest among champions, the wisest among kings, the cunningest among minstrels, the darling of the Vikings of the north; the one man whom Hereward had taken for his pattern and his ideal, the one man under whose

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banner he would have been proud to fight—the earth seemed empty, if Harold Hardraade were gone.

"Thord Gunlaugsson," cried he at last, "or whatever be thy name, if thou hast lied to me, I will draw thee with wild horses."

"Would God that I did lie! I saw him fall with an arrow through his throat. Then Jarl Tosti took the Land-ravager and held it up till he died. Then Eystein Orre took it, coming up hot from the ships. And then he died likewise. Then they all died. We would take no quarter. We threw off our mail, and fought baresark, till all were dead together."[1]

"How camest thou, then, hither?"

"Styrkar the marshal escaped in the night, and I with him, and a few more. And Styrkar bade me bring the news to Flanders, to the Countess, while he took it to Olaf Haroldsson, who lay off in the ships."

"And thou shalt take it. Martin! get this man a horse. A horse, ye villains, and a good one, on your lives!"

"And Tosti is dead?"

"Dead like a hero. Harold offered him quarter—offered him his earldom, they say: even in the midst of battle: but he would not take it. He said he was the Sigurdsson's man now, and true man he would be."

"Harold offered him?—What art babbling at? Who fought you?"

[1] For the details of this battle, see Snorro Sturleson; or the admirable description in Bulwer's *Harold*.

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"Harold Godwinsson, the king."

"Where?"

"At Stanford Brigg, by York Town."

"Harold Godwinsson slew Harold Sigurdsson? After this wolves may eat lions!"

"The Godwinsson is a gallant fighter and a wise general, or I had not been here now."

"Get on thy horse, man!" said he, scornfully and impatiently, "and gallop, if thou canst."

"I have ridden many a mile in Ireland, Earl, and have not forgotten my seat."

"Thou hast, hast thou?" said Martin; "thou art Thord Gunlaugsson of Waterford."

"That am I. How knowest thou me, man?"

"I am of Waterford. Thou hadst a slave lass, once, I think; Mew: they called her Mew, her skin it was so white."

"What's that to thee?" asked Thord, turning on him savagely.

"I meant no harm. I saw her at Waterford when I was a boy, and thought her a fair lass enough, that is all."

And Martin dropped into the rear.

As they rode side by side, Hereward got more details of the fight.

"I knew it would fall out so. I foretold it!" said Thord. "I had a dream. I saw us come to English land, and fight; and I saw the banners floating. And before the English army was a great witchwife, and rode upon a wolf, and he had a corpse in his bloody

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jaws. And when he had eaten one up, she threw him another, till he had swallowed all."

"Did she throw him thine?" asked Martin, who ran holding by the stirrup.

"That did she, and eaten I saw myself. Yet here I am alive."

"Then thy dreams were naught."

"I do not know that. The wolf may have me yet."

"I fear thou art fey."[1]

"What the devil is that to thee if I be?"

"Naught. But be comforted. I am a necromancer; and this I know by my art, that the weapon that will slay thee was never forged in Flanders here."

"There was another man had a dream," said Thord, turning from Martin angrily. "He was standing in the king's ship, and he saw a great witch-wife with a fork and a trough stand on the island. And he saw a fowl on every ship's stem, a raven, or else an eagle; and he heard the witchwife sing an evil song."[2]

By this time they were in St. Omer.

Hereward rode straight to the Countess Judith's house. He never had entered it yet; and was likely to be attacked if he entered it now. But when the door was opened, he thrust in with so earnest and sad a face that the servants let him pass, though not

[1] Prophesying his own death; literally "fated."

[2] For these two dreams, see Snorro Sturleson.

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without growling and motions as of getting their weapons.

"I come in peace, my men, I come in peace: this is no time for brawls. Where is the steward, or one of the countess's ladies?—Tell her, madam, that Hereward waits her commands, and entreats her, in the name of St. Mary and all Saints, to vouchsafe him one word in private."

The lady hurried into the bower. The next moment Judith hurried out into the hall, her fair face blanched, her fair eyes wide with terror.

Hereward fell on his knee.

"What is this? It must be bad news if you bring it."

"Madam, the grave covers all feuds. Earl Tosti was a very valiant hero; and would to God that we had been friends!"

She did not hear the end of the sentence: but fell back with a shriek into the women's arms.

Hereward told them all that they needed to know of that fratricidal strife; and then to Thord Gunlaugsson—

"Have you any token that this is true? Mind what I warned you, if you lied!"

"This have I, Jarl and ladies," and he drew from his bosom a reliquary. "Ulf the marshal took this off the Jarl's neck, and bade me give it to none but his lady. Therefore, with your pardon, Sir Jarl, I did not tell you that I had it, not knowing whether you were an honest man."

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"Thou hast done well; and an honest man thou shalt find me, though no Jarl as yet. Come home, and I will feed thee at my own table; for I have been a sea-rover and a Viking myself."

They left the reliquary with the ladies, and went.

"See to this good man, Martin."

"That will I, as the apple of my eye."

And Hereward went into Torfrida's room.

"I have news, news!"

"So have I."

"Harold Hardraade is slain, and Tosti too!"

"Where? how?"

"Harold Godwinsson slew them by York."

"Brother has slain brother? O God that died on cross!" murmured Torfrida, "when will men look to thee, and have mercy on their own souls? But Hereward—I have news—news more terrible by far. It came an hour ago. I have been dreading your coming back."

"Say on. If Harold Hardraade is dead, no worse can happen."

"But Harold Godwinsson is dead!"

"Dead! Who next? William of Normandy? The world seems coming to an end, as the monks say it will soon."[1]

"A great battle has been fought at a place they call Heathfield."

[1] There was a general rumour abroad that the end of the world was at hand; for the "one thousand years" of prophecy had expired.

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"Close by Hastings? Close to the landing-place? Harold must have flown thither back from York. What a captain the man is, after all!"

"Was. He is dead, and all the Godwinssons; and England lost."

If Torfrida had feared the effect of her news, her heart was lightened at once as Hereward answered haughtily—

"England lost? Sussex is not England, nor Wessex either, any more than Harold was king thereof. England lost? Let the tanner try to cross the Watling Street, and he will find out that he has another stamp of Englishman to deal with."

"Hereward, Hereward, do not be unjust to the dead. Men say—the Normans say—that they fought like heroes."

"I never doubted that: but it makes me mad—as it does all Eastern and Northern men—to hear these Wessex churls and Godwinssons calling themselves all England."

Torfrida shook her head. To her, as to most foreigners, Wessex and the south-east counties were England; the most civilised; the most French; the seat of royalty; having all the prestige of law, and order, and wealth. And she was shrewd enough to see, that as it was the part of England which had most sympathy with French civilisation, it was the very part where the Frenchman could most easily gain and keep his hold. The event proved that Torfrida was right: but all she said was, "It is dangerously near to France, at least."

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"It is that. I would sooner see 100,000 French north of the Humber, than 10,000 in Kent and Sussex, where he can hurry over supplies and men every week. It is the starting-point for him, if he means to conquer England piecemeal."

"And he does."

"And he shall not!" and Hereward started up, and walked to and fro. "If all the Godwinssons be dead, there are Leofricssons left, I trust, and Siward's kin, and the Gospatrics in Northumbria. Ah! Where were my nephews in the battle? Not killed too, I trust?"

"They were not in the battle."

"Not with their new brother-in-law? Much he has gained by throwing away the Swan-neck, like a base traitor as he was, and marrying my pretty niece. But where were they?"

"No man knows clearly. They followed him down as far as London, and then lingered about the city, meaning no man can tell what: but we shall hear—and I fear hear too much—before a week is over."

"Heavens! this is madness, indeed. This is the way to be eaten up one by one. Neither to do the thing nor leave it alone. If I had been there! If I had been there——"

"You would have saved England, my hero!" and Torfrida believed her own words.

"I don't say that. Besides, I say that England is not lost. But there were but two things to do: either to have sent to William at once, and offered him the

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crown, if he would but guarantee the Danish laws and liberties to all north of the Watling Street; and if he would, fall on the Godwinssons themselves, by fair means or foul, and send their heads to William."

"Or what?"

"Or have marched down after him, with every man they could muster, and thrown themselves on the Frenchman's flank in the battle—or between him and the sea, cutting him off from France—or—Oh, that I had but been there, what things could I have done!—And now these two wretched boys have fooled away their only chance——"

"Some say that they hoped for the crown themselves."

"Which? Not both? Vain babies!" and Hereward laughed bitterly. "I suppose one will murder the other next, in order to make himself the stronger by being the sole rival to the tanner. The midden cock sole rival to the eagle! Boy Waltheof will set up his claim next, I presume, as Siward's son; and then Gospatric, as Ethelred Evil-Counsel's great-grandson; and so forth, and so forth, till they all eat each other up, and the tanner's grandson eats the last. What care I? Tell me about the battle, my lady, if you know aught. That is more to my way than their statecraft."

And Torfrida told him all she knew of the great fight on Heathfield Down, which men call Senlac, and the battle of Hastings. And as she told it, in her wild eloquent fashion, Hereward's face reddened, and his eyes kindled. And when she told of the last

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struggle round the Dragon[1] standard; of Harold's mighty figure in the front of all, hewing with his great double-headed axe, and then rolling in gore and agony, an arrow in his eyeball; of the last rally of the men of Kent; of Gurth, the last defender of the standard, falling by William's sword; of the standard hurled to the ground, and the Popish Gonfanon planted in its place—Then Hereward's eyes, for the first and last time for many a year, were flushed with noble tears; and springing up he cried, "Honour to the Godwinssons! Honour to the Southern men! Honour to all true English hearts! Why was I not there, to go with them to Valhalla?"

Torfrida caught him round the neck. "Because you are here, my hero, to free your country from her tyrants, and win yourself immortal fame."

"Fool that I am, I verily believe I am crying."

"Those tears," said she, as she kissed them away, "are more precious to Torfrida than the spoils of a hundred fights, for they tell me that Hereward still loves his country; still honours virtue, even in a foe."

And thus Torfrida—whether from a woman's

[1] I have dared to differ from the excellent authorities who say that the standard was that of a Fighting Man: because the Bayeux Tapestry represents the last struggle as in front of a Dragon standard, which must be—as is to be expected—the old standard of Wessex, the standard of English Royalty. That Harold had also a Fighting Man standard, and that it was sent by William to the Pope, there is no reason to doubt. But if the Bayeux Tapestry be correct, the fury of the fight for the standard would be explained. It would be a fight for the very symbol of King Edward's dynasty.

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sentiment of pity, or from a woman's instinctive abhorrence of villany and wrong, had become there and then an Englishwoman of the English, as she proved by strange deeds and sufferings for many a year.

"Where is that Norseman, Martin?" asked Hereward that night ere he went to bed. "I want to hear more of poor Hardraade."

"You can't speak to him now, master. He is sound asleep this two hours; and warm enough, I will warrant."

"Where?"

"In the great green bed with blue curtains, just above the kitchen."

"What nonsense is this?"

"The bed where you and I shall lie some day; and the kitchen to which we shall be sent down to turn our own spits, unless we mend our manners mightily."

Hereward looked at the man. Madness glared unmistakably in his eyes.

"You have killed him!"

"And buried him, cheating the priests."

"Traitor!" cried Hereward, seizing him.

"Take your hands off my throat, master. He was only my father."

Hereward stood shocked and puzzled. After all, the man was No-man's-man and would not be missed; and Martin Lightfoot, letting alone his madness, was as a third hand and foot to him all day long.

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So all he said was, "I hope you have buried him well and safely?"

"You may walk your bloodhound over his grave to-morrow without finding him."

And where he lay, Hereward never knew. But from that night Martin got a trick of stroking and patting his little axe, and talking to it as if it had been alive.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW EARL GODWIN'S WIDOW CAME TO ST. OMER.

It would be vain to attempt even a sketch of the reports which came to Flanders from England during the next two years; or of the conversations which ensued thereon between Baldwin and his courtiers, and between Hereward and Torfrida. Two reports out of three were doubtless false; and two conversations out of three founded on those false reports.

It is best, therefore, to interrupt the thread of the story, by some small sketch of the state of England after the battle of Hastings; that so we may at least guess at the tenor of Hereward and Torfrida's counsels.

William had, as yet, conquered little more than the South of England: hardly indeed all that; for Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and the neighbouring parts, which had belonged to Sweyn, Harold's brother, were still insecure; and the noble old city of Exeter, confident in her Roman walls, did not yield till two years after, in A.D. 1068.

North of his conquered territory, Mercia stretched almost across England, from Chester to the Wash, governed by Edwin and Morcar. Edwin called him-

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self Earl of Mercia, and held the Danish burghs. On the extreme north-west, the Roman city of Chester was his; while on the extreme south-east (as Domesday Book testifies), Morcar still held large lands round Bourne, and throughout the south of Lincolnshire, besides calling himself the Earl of Northumbria. The young men seemed the darlings of the half Danish Northmen. Chester, Coventry, Derby, Nottingham, Leicester, Stamford, a chain of fortified towns stretching across England, were at their command; Blethyn, prince of North Wales, was their nephew.

Northumbria, likewise, was not yet in William's hands. Indeed it was in no man's hands, since the free Danes north of the Humber had expelled Tosti, putting Morcar in his place. Morcar, instead of residing in his earldom of Northumbria, had made one Oswulf his deputy: but he had rivals enough. There was Gospatric, claiming through his grandfather Uchtred, and strong in the protection of his cousin Malcolm king of Scotland; there was young Waltheof, "the forest thief,"—or rather, perhaps, "the thief of slaughter," who had been born to Siward Biorn in his old age, just after the battle of Dunsinane; a fine and gallant young man, destined to a swift and sad end.

William sent to the Northumbrians one Copsi, a thane of mark and worth, as his procurator, to expel Oswulf. Oswulf and the land folk answered by killing Copsi, and doing every man that which was right in his own eyes.

William determined to propitiate the young earls.

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Perhaps he intended to govern the centre and north of England through them, as feudal vassals; and hoped meanwhile to pay his Norman conquerors sufficiently out of the forfeited lands of Harold, and those who had fought by his side at Hastings. It was not his policy to make himself, much less to call himself, the conqueror of England. He claimed to be its legitimate sovereign, deriving from his cousin Edward the Confessor; and whosoever would acknowledge him as such, had neither right or cause to fear. Therefore he sent for the young earls. He courted Waltheof, and more, really loved him. He promised Edwin his daughter in marriage. Some say it was Constance, afterwards married to Alan Fergant, of Brittany: but it may also have been the beautiful Adelaide, who, none knew why, early gave up the world, and died in a convent. Be that as it may, the two young people saw each, and loved each other at Rouen, whither William took Waltheof, Edwin, and his brother; as honoured guests in name; in reality as hostages likewise.

With the same rational and prudent policy, William respected the fallen royal families, both of Harold and of Edward; at least, he warred not against women; and the wealth and influence of the great English ladies was enormous. Edith, sister of Harold, and widow of the Confessor, lived in wealth and honour at Winchester. Gyda, Harold's mother, retained Exeter and her land. Aldytha,[1] or Elfgiva, widow of

[1] See her history, told, as none other can tell it, in Bulwer's *Harold.*

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Harold, lived rich and safe in Chester. Godiva the Countess owned, so antiquarians say, manors from Cheshire to Lincolnshire, which would be now yearly worth the income of a great duke. Agatha the Hungarian, widow of Edmund the outlaw, dwelt at Romsey in Hampshire, under William's care. Her son Edgar Etheling, the rightful heir of England, was treated by William not only with courtesy, but with affection; and allowed to rebel, when he did rebel, with impunity. For the descendant of Rollo the heathen Viking, had become a civilised chivalrous Christian knight. His mighty forefather would have split the Etheling's skull with his own axe. A Frank king would have shaved the young man's head, and immured him in a monastery. An eastern sultan would have thrust out his eyes, or strangled him at once. But William, however cruel, however unscrupulous, had a knightly heart, and somewhat of a Christian conscience; and his conduct to his only lawful rival is a noble trait amid many sins.

So far all went well, till William went back to France; to be likened, not as his ancestors, to the gods of Valhallá, or the barbarous and destroying Vikings of mythic ages, but to Cæsar, Pompey, Vespasian, and the civilised and civilising heroes of classic Rome.

But while he sat at the Easter Feast at Fécamp, displaying to Franks, Flemings, and Bretons, as well as to his own Normans, the treasures of Edward's palace at Westminster, and "more English wealth

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than could be found in the whole estate of Gaul;" while he sat there in his glory, with his young dupes, Edwin, Morcar, and Waltheof, by his side; having sent Harold's banner in triumph to the Pope, as a token that he had conquered the church as well as the nation of England, and having founded abbeys as thank-offerings to Him who had seemed to prosper him in his great crime: at that very hour the hand-writing was on the wall unseen by man; and he, and his policy, and his race, were weighed in the balance, and found wanting.

For now broke out in England that wrong-doing which endured as long as she was a mere appanage and foreign farm of Norman kings, whose hearts and homes were across the seas in France. Fitz-Osbern, and Odo the warrior-prelate, William's half-brother, had been left as his regents in England. Little do they seem to have cared for William's promise to the English people that they were to be ruled still by the laws of Edward the Confessor, and that where a grant of land was made to a Norman he was to hold it as the Englishman had done before him, with no heavier burdens on himself, but with no heavier burdens on the poor folk who tilled the land for him. Oppression began, lawlessness, and violence; men were ill-treated on the highways; and women—what was worse—in their own homes; and the regents abetted the ill-doers. "It seems," says a most impartial historian,[1] "as if the Normans, released from all authority, all restraint,

[1] The late Sir F. Palgrave.

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all fear of retaliation, determined to reduce the English nation to servitude, and drive them to despair.

In the latter attempt they succeeded but too soon; in the former, they succeeded at last: but they paid dearly for their success.

Hot young Englishmen began to emigrate. Some went to the court of Constantinople, to join the Varanger guard, and have their chance of a Polotaswarf like Harold Hardraade. Some went to Scotland to Malcolm Canmore, and brooded over return and revenge. But Harold's sons went to their father's cousin, Ulfsson of Denmark, and called on him to come and reconquer England in the name of his uncle Canute the Great; and many an Englishman went with them.

These things Gospatric watched, as earl (so far as he could make any one obey him in the utter subversion of all order) of the lands between Forth and Tyne. And he determined to flee, ere evil befell him, to his cousin Malcolm Canmore, taking with him Marlesweyn of Lincolnshire, who had fought, it is said, by Harold's side at Hastings, and young Waltheof of York. But, moreover, having a head, and being indeed, as his final success showed, a man of ability and courage, he determined on a stroke of policy, which had incalculable after-effects on the history of Scotland. He persuaded Agatha the Hungarian, Margaret and Christina her daughters, and Edgar the Etheling himself, to flee with him to Scotland. How he contrived to send them messages to

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Romsey, far south in Hampshire; how they contrived to escape to the Humber, and thence up to the Forth; this is a romance in itself, of which the chroniclers have left hardly a hint. But the thing was done; and at St. Margaret's Hope, as tradition tells, the Scottish king met, and claimed as his unwilling bride, that fair and holy maiden who was destined to soften his fierce passions, to civilise and purify his people, and to become—if all had their just dues—the true patron saint of Scotland.

Malcolm Canmore promised a mighty army; Sweyn a mighty fleet. And meanwhile, Eustace of Boulogne, the Confessor's brother-in-law, himself a Norman, rebelled at the head of the down-trodden men of Kent; and the Welshmen were harrying Herefordshire with fire and sword, in revenge for Norman ravages.

But as yet the storm did not burst. William returned, and with him something like order. He conquered Exeter; he destroyed churches and towns to make his New Forest. He brought over his Queen Matilda with pomp and great glory; and with her, the Bayeux tapestry which she had wrought with her own hands; and meanwhile Sweyn Ulfsson was too busy threatening Olaf Haroldsson, the new king of Norway, to sail for England; and the sons of King Harold of England had to seek help from the Irish Danes; and ravaging the country round Bristol, be beaten off by the valiant burghers with heavy loss.

So the storm did not burst; and need not have burst, it may be, at all, had William kept his plighted

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word. But he would not give his fair daughter to Edwin. His Norman nobles, doubtless, looked upon such an alliance as debasing to a civilised lady. In their eyes, the Englishman was a barbarian; and though the Norman might well marry the English-woman, if she had beauty or wealth, it was a danger-ous precedent to allow the Englishman to marry the Norman woman, and that woman a princess. Beside, there were those who coveted Edwin's broad lands; Roger de Montgomery, who already (it is probable) held part of them as Earl of Shrewsbury, had no wish to see Edwin the son-in-law of his sovereign. Be the cause what it may, William faltered and refused; and Edwin and Morcar left the Court of Westminster in wrath. Waltheof followed them, having discovered —what he was weak enough continually to forget again—the treachery of the Norman. The young earls went off—one midlandward, one northward. The people saw their wrongs in those of their earls, and the rebellion burst forth at once; the Welsh under Blethyn, and the Cumbrians under Malcolm and Donaldbain, giving their help in the struggle.

It was the year 1069; a more evil year for England than even the year of Hastings.

The rebellion was crushed in a few months. The great general marched steadily north, taking the boroughs one by one, storming, burning, sometimes, whole towns, massacring or mutilating young and old, and leaving, as he went on, a new portent, a Norman donjon—till then all but unseen in England—as a

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place of safety for his garrisons. At Oxford (sacked horribly, and all but destroyed), at Warwick (destroyed utterly), at Nottingham, at Stafford, at Shrewsbury, at Cambridge on the huge barrow which overhangs the fen; and at York itself, which had opened its gates, trembling, to the great Norman strategist—at each doomed borough rose a castle, with its tall square tower within, its bailey around, and all the appliances of that ancient Roman science of fortification, of which the Danes, as well as the Saxons, knew nothing. Their struggle had only helped to tighten their bonds; and what wonder? There was among them neither unity, nor plan, nor governing mind and will. Hereward's words had come true. The only man, save Gospatric, who had a head in England, was Harold Godwinsson: and he lay in Waltham Abbey, while the monks sang masses for his soul.

Edwin, Morcar, and Waltheof trembled before a genius superior to their own—a genius indeed, which had not its equal then in Christendom. They came in, and begged grace of the king. They got it. But Edwin's earldom was forfeited, and he and his brother became, from thenceforth, desperate men.

Malcolm of Scotland trembled likewise, and asked for peace. The clans, it is said, rejoiced thereat, having no wish for a war which could buy them neither spoil nor land. Malcolm sent ambassadors to William, and took (at least for his Cumbrian lands on this side the border) that oath of fealty to the "Basileus of

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Britain," which more than one Scottish king and kinglet had taken before—with the secret proviso (which, during the middle ages, seems to have been thoroughly understood in such cases by both parties), that he should be William's man just as long as William could compel him to be so, and no longer.

Then came cruel and unjust confiscations. Ednoth the standard-bearer had fallen at Bristol, fighting for William against the Haroldssons: yet all his lands were given away to Normans. Edwin and Morcar's lands were parted likewise; and—to specify cases which bear especially on the history of Hereward—Oger the Briton got many of Morcar's manors round Bourne, and Gilbert of Ghent many belonging to Marlesweyn about Lincoln city. And so did that valiant and crafty knight find his legs once more on other men's ground, and reappears in monkish story as "the most devout, and pious earl, Gilbert of Ghent."

What followed, Hereward must have heard not from flying rumours; but from one who had seen, and known, and judged of all.[1]

For one day, about this time, Hereward was riding out of the gate of St. Omer, when the porter appealed to him. Begging for admittance were some twenty women, and a clerk or two; and they must needs see the châtelain. The châtelain was away. What should he do?

Hereward looked at the party, and saw, to his sur-

[1] For Gyda's coming to St. Omer that year, see Ordericus Vitalis.

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prise, that they were Englishwomen; and that two of them were women of rank, to judge from the rich materials of their travel-stained and tattered garments. The ladies rode on sorry country garrons, plainly hired from the peasants who drove them. The rest of the women had walked; and weary, and footsore enough they were.

"You are surely Englishwomen?" asked he of the foremost, as he lifted his cap.

The lady bowed assent, beneath a heavy veil.

"Then you are my guests. Let them pass in." And Hereward threw himself off his horse, and took the lady's bridle.

"Stay," she said, with an accent half Wessex, half Danish. "I seek the Countess Judith, if it will please you to tell me where she lives."

"The Countess Judith, lady, is no longer in St. Omer. Since her husband's death, she lives with her mother at Bruges."

The lady made a gesture of disappointment.

"It were best for you, therefore, to accept my hospitality, till such time as I can send you and your ladies on to Bruges."

"I must first know who it is who offers me hospitality."

This was said so proudly, that Hereward answered proudly enough in return—

"I am Hereward Leofricsson, whom his foes call Hereward the outlaw; and his friends, Hereward the master of knights."

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She started, and threw her veil back, looking intently at him. He, for his part, gave but one glance: and then cried,

"Mother of Heaven! You are the great Countess!"

"Yes, I was that woman once, if all be not a dream. I am now I know not what, seeking hospitality—if I can believe my eyes and ears—of Godiva's son."

"And from Godiva's son you shall have it, as though you were Godiva's self. God so deal with my mother, madam, as I will deal with you."

"His father's wit, and his mother's beauty!" said the great Countess, looking upon him. "Too, too like my own lost Harold!"

"Not so, my lady. I am a dwarf compared to him." And Hereward led the garron on by the bridle, keeping his cap in hand, while all wondered who the dame could be, before whom Hereward the champion would so abase himself.

"Leofric's son does me too much honour. He has forgotten, in his chivalry, that I am Godwin's widow."

"I have not forgotten that you are Sprakaleg's daughter, and niece of Canute, king of kings.[1] Neither have I forgotten that you are an English lady, in times in which all English folk are one, and all old English feuds are wiped away."

"In English blood. Ah! if these last words of yours were true, as you, perhaps, might make them true, England might be saved even yet."

"Saved?"

[1] See note at end of this Chapter.

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"If there were one man in it, who cared for aught but himself."

Hereward was silent and thoughtful.

He had sent Martin back to his house, to tell Torfrida to prepare bath and food; for the Countess Gyda, with all her train, was coming to be her guest. And when they entered the court, Torfrida stood ready.

"Is this your lady?" asked Gyda, as Hereward lifted her from her horse.

"I am his lady, and your servant," said Torfrida bowing.

"Child! child! Bow not to me. Talk not of servants to a wretched slave, who only longs to crawl into some hole and die, forgetting all she was, and all she had."

And the great Countess reeled with weariness and woe, and fell upon Torfrida's neck.

A tall veiled lady next her helped to support her; and between them they almost carried her through the hall, and into Torfrida's best guest-chamber.

And there they gave her wine, and comforted her, and let her weep awhile in peace.

The second lady had unveiled herself, displaying a beauty which was still brilliant, in spite of sorrow, hunger, the stains of travel, and more than forty years of life.

"She must be Gunhilda," guessed Torfrida to herself, and not amiss.

She offered Gyda a bath, which she accepted eagerly, like a true Dane.

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"I have not washed for weeks. Not since we sat starving on the Flat-Holm there, in the Severn sea. I have become as foul as my own fortunes; and why not? It is all of a piece. Why should not beggars go unwashed?"

But when Torfrida offered Gunhilda the bath, she declined.

"I have done, lady, with such carnal vanities. What use in cleaning the body which is itself unclean, and whitening the outside of this sepulchre? If I can but cleanse my soul fit for my heavenly Bridegroom, the body may become—as it must at last—food for worms."

"She will needs enter religion, poor child," said Gyda; "and what wonder?"

"I have chosen the better part, and it shall not be taken from me."

"Taken! Taken! Hark to her. She means to mock me, the proud nun, with that same 'taken.'"

"God forbid, mother!"

"Then why say taken, to me from whom all is taken?—Husband, sons, wealth, land, renown, power—power which I loved, wretch that I was, as well as husband and as sons. Ah God! the girl is right. Better to rot in the convent, than writhe in the world. Better never to have had, than to have had and lost."

"Amen!" said Gunhilda. "'Blessed are the barren, and they that never gave suck,' saith the Lord."

"No! Not so!" cried Torfrida. "Better, Count-

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ess, to have had and lost, than never to have had at all. The glutton was right, swine as he was, when he said that not even heaven could take from him the dinners he had eaten. How much more we, if we say, not even heaven can take from us the love wherewith we have loved? Will not our souls be richer thereby, through all eternity?"

"In Purgatory?" asked Gunhilda.

"In Purgatory, or where else you will. I love my love; and though my love prove false, he has been true; though he trample me under foot, he has held me in his bosom; though he kill me, he has lived for me. Better to have been his but for one day, than never to have been his at all. What I have had will still be mine, when that which I have shall fail me."

"And you would buy short joy with lasting woe?"

"That would I, like a brave man's child. I say—The present is mine, and I will enjoy it as greedily as a child. Let the morrow take thought for the things of itself.—Countess, your bath is ready."

Nineteen years after, when the great conqueror lay, tossing with agony and remorse, upon his dying-bed, haunted by the ghosts of his victims, the clerks of St. Saviour's in Bruges city were putting up a leaden tablet (which remains, they say, unto this very day) to the memory of one whose gentle soul had gently passed away. "Charitable to the poor, kind and agreeable to her attendants, courteous to strangers, and only severe to herself," Gunhilda had lingered on

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in a world of war and crime; and had gone, it may be, to meet Torfrida beyond the grave, and there finish their doubtful argument.

The Countess was served with food in Torfrida's chamber. Hereward and his wife refused to sit, and waited on her standing.

"I wish to show these saucy Flemings," said he, "that an English princess is a princess still in the eyes of one more noble born than any of them."

But after she had eaten, she made Torfrida sit before her on the bed, and Hereward likewise; and began to talk; eagerly, as one who had not unburdened her mind for many weeks; and eloquently too, as became Sprakaleg's daughter, and Godwin's wife.

She told them how she had fled from the storm of Exeter, with a troop of women, who dreaded the brutalities of the Normans.[1] How they had wandered up through Devon, found fishers' boats at Watchet in Somersetshire, and gone off to the little desert island of the Flat-Holm, in hopes of there meeting with the Irish fleet, which her sons, Edmund and Godwin, were bringing against the West of England. How the fleet had never come, and they had starved for many days; and how she had bribed a passing merchantman to take her and her wretched train to the land of Baldwin the Débonnaire, who might have pity on her for the sake

[1] To do William justice, he would not allow his men to enter the city while they were bloodhot; and so prevented, as far as he could, the excesses which Gyda had feared.

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of his daughter Judith, and Tosti her husband, who died in his sins.

And at his name, her tears began to flow afresh: fallen in his overweening pride,—like Sweyn, like Harold, like herself——

"The time was, when I would not weep. If I could I would not. For a year, lady, after Senlac, I sat like a stone. I hardened my heart like a wall of brass against God and man. Then, there upon the Flat-Holm, feeding on shell-fish, listening to the wail of the sea-fowl, looking outside across the wan water for the sails which never came, my heart broke down a moment. And I heard a voice crying, 'There is no help in man, go thou to God.' And I answered—That were a beggar's trick, to go to God in need, when I went not to Him in plenty. No. Without God I planned, and without Him I must fail. Without Him I went into the battle, and without Him I must bide the brunt. And at best—Can He give me back my sons? And I hardened my heart again like a stone, and shed no tear till I saw your fair face this day."

"And now," she said, turning sharply on Hereward, "what do you do here? Do you not know that your nephew's lands are parted between grooms from Angers, and scullions from Normandy?"

"So much the worse for both them and the grooms."

"Sir?"

"You forget, lady, that I am an outlaw."

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"But do you not know that your mother's lands are seized likewise?"

"She will take refuge with her grandsons, who are, as I hear, again on good terms with their new master, showing thereby a most laudable and Christian spirit of forgiveness."

"On good terms? Do you not know, then, that they are fighting again, outlaws, and desperate at the Frenchman's treachery? Do you not know that they have been driven out of York, after defending the city street by street, house by house? Do you not know that there is not an old man or a child in arms left in York; and that your nephews, and the few fighting men who were left, went down the Humber in boats, and north to Scotland, to Gospatric and Waltheof? Do you not know that your mother is left alone—at Bourne, or God knows where—to endure at the hands of Norman ruffians what thousands more endure?"

Hereward made no answer, but played with his dagger.

"And do you know that England is ready to burst into a blaze, if there be one man wise enough to put the live coal into the right place? That Sweyn Ulffsson my nephew, or Asbiorn his brother, will surely land there within the year with a mighty host? And that if there be one man in England of wit enough, and knowledge enough of war, to lead the armies of England, the Frenchman may be driven into the sea ——is there any here who understands English?"

"None but ourselves."

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"And Canute's nephew sit on Canute's throne?"

Hereward still played with his dagger.

"Not the sons of Harold, then?" asked he after a while.

"Never! I promise you that—I, Countess Gyda, their grandmother."

"Why promise me, of all men, O great lady?"

"Because—I will tell you after. But this I say, my curse on the grandson of mine who shall try to seize that fatal crown, which cost the life of my fairest, my noblest, my wisest, my bravest!"

Hereward bowed his head, as if consenting to the praise of Harold. But he knew who spoke; and he was thinking within himself: "Her curse may be on him who shall seize, and yet not on him to whom it is given."

"All that they, young and unskilful lads, have a right to ask is, their father's earldoms and their father's lands. Edwin and Morcar would keep their earldoms as of right. It is a pity that there is no lady of the house of Godwin, whom we could honour by offering her to one of your nephews, in return for their nobleness in giving Aldytha to my Harold. But this foolish girl here, refuses to wed——"

"And is past forty," thought Hereward to himself.

"However, some plan to join the families more closely together might be thought on. One of the young earls might marry Judith here. Waltheof would have Northumbria, in right of his father, and ought to be well content—for although she is some-

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what older than he, she is peerlessly beautiful—to marry your niece Aldytha."

"And Gospatric?"

"Gospatric," she said, with a half-sneer, "will be as sure, as he is able, to get something worth having for himself out of any medley. Let him have Scotch Northumbria, if he claim it. He is more English than Dane: he will keep those northern English more true to us."

"But what of Sweyn's gallant holders and housecarles, who are to help to do this mighty deed?"

"Senlac left gaps enough among the noblemen of the South, which they can fill up, in the place of the French scum who now riot over Wessex. And if that should suffice, what higher honour for me, or for my daughter the Queen, than to devote our lands to the heroes who have won them back for us?"

Hereward hoped inwardly that Gyda would be as good as her word; for her greedy grasp had gathered to itself, before the Battle of Hastings, no less than six-and-thirty thousand acres of good English soil.

"I have always heard," said he bowing, "that if the Lady Gyda had been born a man, England would have had another all-seeing and all-daring statesman, and Earl Godwin a rival, instead of a helpmate. Now I believe what I have heard."

But Torfrida looked sadly at the Countess. There was something pitiable in the sight of a woman ruined, bereaved, seemingly hopeless, portioning out the very land from which she was a fugitive; unable to restrain

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the passion for intrigue, which had been the toil and the bane of her sad and splendid life.

"And now," she went on, "surely some kind saint brought me, even on my first landing, to you of all living men."

"Doubtless the blessed St. Bertin, beneath whose shadow we repose here in peace," said Hereward somewhat drily.

"I will go barefoot to his altar to-morrow, and offer my last jewel," said Gunhilda.

"You," said Gyda, without noticing her daughter, "are above all men the man who is needed." And she began praising Hereward's valour, his fame, his eloquence, his skill as a general and engineer; and when he suggested, smiling, that he was an exile and an outlaw, she insisted that he was all the fitter from that very fact. He had no enemies among the nobles. He had been mixed up in none of the civil wars and blood feuds of the last fifteen years. He was known only as that which he was, the ablest English captain of his day—the only man who could cope with William, the only man whom all parties in England would alike obey.

And so, with flattery as well as with truth, she persuaded, if not Hereward, at least Torfrida, that he was the man destined to free England once more; and that an earldom—or anything which he chose to ask—would be the sure reward of his assistance.

"Torfrida," said Hereward that night, "kiss me well; for you will not kiss me again for a while."

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"What?"

"I am going to England to-morrow."

"Alone?"

"Alone. I and Martin to spy out the land; and a dozen or so of housecarles to take care of the ship in harbour."

"But you have promised to fight the Viscount of Pinkney."

"I will be back again in time for him. Not a word —I must go to England, or go mad."

"But Countess Gyda? Who will squire her to Bruges?"

"You, and the rest of my men. You must tell her all. She has a woman's heart, and will understand. And tell Baldwin I shall be back within the month, if I am alive on land or water."

"Hereward, Hereward, the French will kill you!"

"Not while I have your armour on. Peace, little fool! Are you actually afraid for Hereward at last?"

"Oh, heavens! when am I not afraid for you?" and she cried herself to sleep upon his bosom. But she knew that it was the right, and knightly, and Christian thing to do.

Two days after, a long ship ran out of the Aa, and sailed away north.

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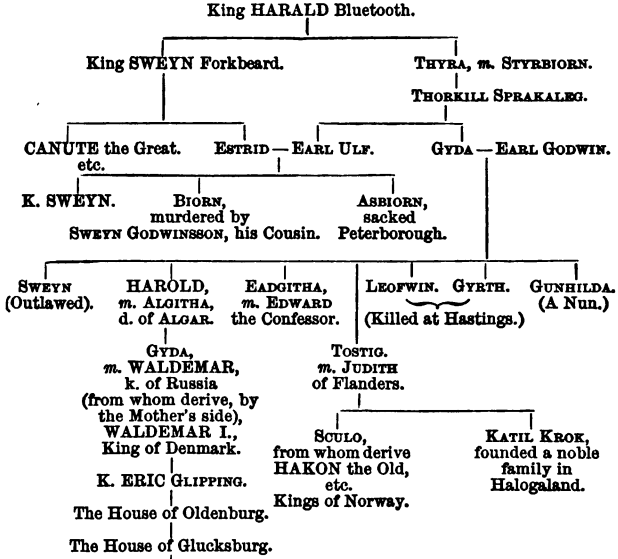
NOTE.—I give so much of the pedigree of the Countess Gyda as may serve to explain her connection with the Royal House of Denmark.



Langebek (in his Scriptores Rerum Danicarum) tries ingeniously enough to rationalise the mythic pedigree of Earl Siward Digre, by making the Fairy Bear identical with Styrbiorn, Spratling his son with Thorkill Sprakaleg, and Biorn Bearsson, father of Siward, a brother of Earl Ulf and Countess Gyda. But if so, Ulf and Gyda would have been notoriously of the House of the Bear, and famous, like Siward, for their pointed ears. Beside, Siward would thus have been the nephew of Countess Gyda and Earl Godwin, a fact which is mentioned by no chronicler, and which is inadmissible on account of Siward's age. His pedigree is altogether mythical, and best left in the fairy-land whence it sprang.

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CHAPTER XIX.

HOW HEREWARD CLEARED BOURNE OF FRENCHMEN.

It may have been well a week after, that Hereward came from the direction of Boston, with Martin running at his heels.

As Hereward rode along the summer wold the summer sun sank low, till just before it went down he came to an island of small enclosed fields, high banks, elm trees, and a farm inside; one of those most ancient holdings of the Southern and Eastern Counties, still to be distinguished, by their huge banks and dykes full of hedgerow timber, from the more modern corn-lands outside, which were in Hereward's time mostly common pasture-land, or rough fen.

"This should be Azerdun," said he; "and there inside, as I live, stands Azer getting in his crops. But who has he with him?"

With the old man were some half-dozen men of his own rank; some helping the serfs with might and main; one or two standing on the top of the banks, as if on the look-out: but all armed cap-a-pie.

"His friends are helping him to get them in," quoth Martin, "for fear of the rascally Frenchmen. A

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pleasant and peaceable country we have come back to."

"And a very strong fortress are they holding," said Hereward, "against either French horsemen or French arrows. How to dislodge those six fellows without six times their number, I do not see. It is well to recollect that."

And so he did; and turned to use again and again, in after years, the strategic capabilities of an old-fashioned English farm.

Hereward spurred his horse up to the nearest gate, and was instantly confronted by a little fair-haired man, as broad as he was tall, who heaved up a long twybill, or double axe, and bade him, across the gate, go to a certain place.

"Little Winter, little Winter, my chuck, my darling, my mad fellow, my brother-in-arms, my brother in robbery and murder, are you grown so honest in your old age that you will not know little Hereward the wolf's-head?"

"Hereward!" shrieked the doughty little man. "I took you for an accursed Norman in those outlandish clothes;" and lifting up no little voice, he shouted—

"Hereward is back, and Martin Lightfoot at his heels!"

The gate was thrown open, and Hereward all but pulled off his horse. He was clapped on the back, turned round and round, admired from head to foot, shouted at by old companions of his boyhood, naughty young housecarles of his old troop, now settled down

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into honest thriving yeomen, hard working and hard fighting, who had heard again and again, with pride, his doughty doings over sea. There was Winter, and Gwenoch, and Gery, Hereward's cousin—ancestor, it may be, of the ancient and honourable house of that name, and of those parts; and Duti and Outi, the two valiant twins; and Ulfard the White, and others, some of whose names, and those of their sons, still stand in Domesday-book.

"And what," asked Hereward, after the first congratulations were over, "of my mother? What of the folk at Bourne?"

All looked each at the other, and were silent.

"You are too late, young lord," said Azer.

"Too late?"

"The Frenchman has given it to a man of Gilbert of Ghent's—his butler, groom, cook, for aught I know."

"To Gilbert's man? And my mother?"

"God help your mother, and your young brother too. She fled to Bourne awhile ago out of Shropshire. All her lands in those parts are given away to Frenchmen. Even Coventry Minster was not safe for her; so hither she came: but even here the French villains have found her out. Three days ago some five-and-twenty French marched into the place."

"And you did not stop them?

"Young sir, who are we to stop an army? We have enough to keep our own. Gilbert, let alone the villain Ivo of Spalding, can send a hundred men down on us in four-and-twenty hours."

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"Then I," said Hereward in a voice of thunder, "will find the way to send two hundred down on him;" and turning his horse from the gate, he rode away furiously towards Bourne.

He turned back as suddenly, and galloped into the field.

"Lads! old comrades! will you stand by me if I need you? Will you follow the Wake, as hundreds have followed him already, if he will only go before?"

"We will, we will."

"I shall be back ere morning. What you have to do, I will tell you then."

"Stop and eat—but for a quarter of an hour."

Then Hereward swore a great oath, by oak and ash and thorn, that he would neither eat bread nor drink water, while there was a Norman left in Bourne.

"A little ale, then, if no water," said Azer.

Hereward laughed, and rode away.

"You will not go single-handed against all those ruffians?" shouted the old man after him. "Saddle, lads, and go with him, some of you, for very shame's sake."

But when they galloped after Hereward, he sent them back. He did not know yet, he said, what he would do. Better that they should gather their forces, and see what men they could afford him, in case of open battle. And he rode swiftly on.

When he came within the lands of Bourne it was dark.

"So much the better," thought Hereward. "I

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have no wish to see the old place till I have somewhat cleaned it out."

He rode slowly into the long street between the overhanging gables, past the cross-ways, and along the water-gang, and the high earth-banks of his ancient home. Above them he could see the great hall, its narrow windows all ablaze with light. With a bitter growl he turned back, trying to recollect a house where he could safely lodge. Martin pointed one out.

"Old Viking Surturbrand, the housecarle, did live there; and maybe lives there still."

"We will try;" and Martin knocked at the door.

The wicket was opened, but not the door; and through the wicket window a surly voice asked who was there.

"Who lives here?"

"Pery, son of Surturbrand. Who art thou who askest?"

"An honest gentleman and his servant, looking for a night's lodging."

"This is no place for honest folk."

"As for that, we don't wish to be more honest than you would have us; but lodging we will pay for, freely and well."

"We want none of thy money:" and the wicket was shut.

Martin pulled out his axe, and drove the panel in.

"What art doing? We shall rouse the town," said Hereward.

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"Let be: these are no French, but honest English, who like one all the better for a little horse-play."

"What didst do that for?" asked the surly voice again. "Were it not for those rascal Frenchmen up above, I would come out and split thy skull for thee."

"If there be Frenchmen up above," said Martin, in a voice of feigned terror, "take us in for the love of the Virgin and all saints, or murdered we shall be ere morning light."

"Thou hast no call to stay in the town, man, unless thou like."

Hereward rode close to the wicket, and said in a low voice, "I am a nobleman of Flanders, good sir, and a sworn foe to all French. My horse is weary, and cannot make a step forward; and if thou be a Christian man, thou will take me in and let me go off safe ere morning light."

"From Flanders?" And the man turned and seemed to consult those within. At length the door was slowly opened, and Pery appeared, his double axe over his shoulder.

"If thou be from Flanders, come in in God's name: but be quick, ere those Frenchmen get wind of thee."

Hereward went in. Five or six men were standing round the long table, upon which they had just laid down their double axes and javelins. More than one countenance Hereward recognised at once. Over the peat fire sat a very old man, his hands upon his knees, as he warmed his bare feet at the embers. He

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started up at the noise, and Hereward saw at once that it was old Surturbrand, and that he was blind.

"Who is it? Is Hereward come?" asked he, with the dull dreamy voice of age.

"Not Hereward, father," said some one, "but a knight from Flanders."

The old man dropped his head upon his breast again with a querulous whine, while Hereward's heart beat high at hearing his own name. At all events he was among friends; and approaching the table he unbuckled his sword and laid it down among the other weapons. "At least," said he, "I shall have no need of thee as long as I am here among honest men."

"What shall I do with my master's horse?" asked Martin. "He can't stand in the street to be stolen by drunken French horseboys."

"Bring him in at the front door, and out at the back," said Pery. "Fine times these, when a man dare not open his own yard gate."

"You seem to be all besieged here," said Hereward. "How is this?"

"Besieged we are," said the man; and then, partly to turn the subject off, "Will it please you to eat, noble sir?"

Hereward declined; he had a vow, he said, not to eat or drink but once a day, till he had fulfilled a quest whereon he was bound. His hosts eyed him, not without some lingering suspicion, but still with admiration and respect. His splendid armour and weapons, as well as the golden locks which fell far

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below his shoulders, and conveniently hid a face which he did not wish yet to have recognised, showed him to be a man of the highest rank; while the palm of his small hand, as hard and bony as any woodman's, proclaimed him to be no novice of a fighting man. The strong Flemish accent which both he and Martin Lightfoot had assumed prevented the honest Englishmen from piercing his disguise. They watched him, while he in turn watched them, struck by their uneasy looks and sullen silence.

"We are a dull company," said he after awhile courteously enough. "We used to be told in Flanders that there were none such stout drinkers and none such jolly singers as you gallant men of the Danelagh here."

"Dull times make dull company," said one, "and no offence to you, Sir Knight."

"Are you such a stranger," asked Pery, "that you do not know what has happened in this town during the last three days?"

"No good I will warrant if you have Frenchmen in it."

"Why was not Hereward here?" wailed the old man in the corner. "It never would have happened if he had been in the town."

"What?" asked Hereward, trying to command himself.

"What has happened," said Pery, "makes a free Englishman's blood boil to tell of. Here, Sir Knight, three days ago, comes in this Frenchman with some

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twenty ruffians of his own, and more of one Taillebois', too, to see him safe; says that this new king, this base-born Frenchman, has given away all Earl Morcar's lands, and that Bourne is his; kills a man or two; upsets the women; gets drunk, ruffles and roysters; breaks into my lady's bower, calling her to give up her keys; and when she gives them, will have all her jewels too. She faces the rogues like a brave Princess; and two of the hounds lay hold of her, and say that she shall ride through Bourne as she rode through Coventry. The boy Godwin,—he that was the great Earl's godson, our last hope, the last of our house,—draws sword on them; and he, a boy of sixteen summers, kills them both out of hand. The rest set on him, cut his head off, and there it sticks on the gable spike of the hall to this hour. And do you ask, after that, why free Englishmen are dull company?"

"And our turn will come next," growled some one. "The turn will go all round; no man's life or land, wife or daughters, will be safe soon for these accursed Frenchmen, unless, as the old man says, Hereward comes back."

Once again the old man wailed out of the chimney-corner: "Why did they ever send Hereward away? I warned the good Earl, I warned my good lady, many a time, to let him sow his wild oats and be done with them, or they might need him some day when they could not find him. He was a lad! He was a lad!" and again he whined, and sank into silence.

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Hereward heard all this dry-eyed, hardening his heart into a great resolve.

"This is a dark story;" said he calmly, "and it would behove me as a gentleman to succour this distressed lady, did I but know how. Tell me what I can do now, and I will do it."

"Your health!" cried one. "You speak like a true knight."

"And he looks the man to keep his word, I'll warrant him," spoke another.

"He does," said Pery, shaking his head: "nevertheless, if anything could have been done, sir, be sure we would have done it: but all our armed men are scattered up and down the country, each taking care, as is natural, of his own cattle and his own women. There are not ten men-at-arms in Bourne this night; and what is worse, sir, as you may guess, who seem to have known war as well as me, there is no man to lead them."

Here Hereward was on the point of saying, "And what if I led you?"—on the point, too, of discovering himself: but he stopped short.

Was it fair to involve this little knot of gallant fellows in what might be a hopeless struggle, and to have all Bourne burned over their heads ere morning by the ruffian Frenchmen? No; his mother's quarrel was his own private quarrel. He would go alone and see the strength of the enemy; and after that, may be, he would raise the country on them: or—and half-a-dozen plans suggested themselves to his crafty brain

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as he sat brooding and scheming: then, as always, utterly self-confident.

He was startled by a burst of noise outside—music, laughter, and shouts.

"There," said Pery bitterly, "are those Frenchmen, dancing and singing in the hall, with my Lord Godwin's head above them?" And curses bitter and deep went round the room. They sat sullen and silent it may be for an hour or more: only moving when, at some fresh outbreak of revelry, the old man started from his doze and asked if that was Hereward coming.

"And who is this Hereward of whom you speak?" said Hereward at last.

"We thought you might know him, Sir Knight, if you come from Flanders, as you say you do," said three or four voices in a surprised and surly tone.

"Certainly I know such a man; if he be Hereward the wolf's head, Hereward the outlaw, Hereward the Wake, as they call him. And a good soldier he is, though he be not yet made a knight; and married, too, to a rich and fair lady. I served under this Hereward a few months ago in the Zeeland War, and know no man whom I would sooner follow."

"Nor I neither," chimed in Martin Lightfoot from the other end of the table.

"Nor we," cried all the men-at-arms at once, each vying with the other in extravagant stories of their hero's prowess, and in asking the knight of Flanders whether they were true or not.

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To avoid offending them, Hereward was forced to confess to a great many deeds which he had never done; but he was right glad to find that his fame had reached his native place, and that he could count on the men if he needed them.

"But who is this Hereward," said he, "that he should have to do with your town here?"

Half-a-dozen voices at once told him his own story.

"I always heard," said he drily, "that that gentleman was of some very noble kin; and I will surely tell him all that has befallen here as soon as I return to Flanders."

At last they grew sleepy. The men went out and brought in bundles of sweet sedge, spread them against the wall, and prepared to lie down, each with his weapon by his side. But when they were lain down, Hereward beckoned to him Pery and Martin Lightfoot, and went out into the back yard, under the pretence of seeing to his horse.

"Pery Surturbrandsson," said he, "thou seemest to be an honest man, as we in foreign parts hold all the Danelagh folk to be. Now it is fixed in my mind to go up, and my servant with me, to yon hall, and see what those French upstarts are about. Wilt thou trust me to go, without my fleeing back here if I am found out, or in any way bringing thee to harm by mixing thee up in my private matters? And wilt thou, if I do not come back, keep for thine own the horse which is in thy stable, and give moreover this purse and this ring to thy lady, if thou canst find

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means to see her face to face; and say thus to her—that he that sent that purse and ring may be found if he be alive, at St. Omer, or with Baldwin Marquis of Flanders; and that if he be dead (as he is like enough to be, his trade being nought but war), she will still find at St. Omer a home and wealth and friends, till these evil times be overpast?"

As Hereward had spoken with some slight emotion, he had dropped unawares his assumed Flemish accent, and had spoken in broad burly Lincolnshire; and therefore it was that Pery, who had been staring at him by the moonlight all the while, said, when he was done, tremblingly—

"Either you are Hereward, or you are his double-ganger. You speak like Hereward, you look like Hereward. Just what Hereward would be now, you are. You are, my lord, whom men call Wake; and you cannot deny it."

"Pery, if thou knowest me, speak of me to no living soul, save to thy lady my mother; and let me and my serving man go free out of thy yard-gate. If I ask thee before morning to open it again to me, thou wilt know that there is not a Frenchmen left in the Hall of Bourne."

Pery threw his arms round him, and embraced him silently.

"Get me only," said Hereward, "some long woman's gear and black mantle, if thou canst, to cover this bright armour of mine."

Pery went off in silence as one stunned; brought

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the mantle; and let them out of the yard-gate. In ten minutes more, the two had waded the Watergang, scrambled the dyke and its palisade, and stood under the gable of the great hall. Not a soul was stirring outside. The serfs were all cowering in their huts like so many rabbits in their burrows, listening in fear to the revelry of their new tyrants. The night was dark; but not so dark but that Hereward could see between him and the sky his brother's long locks floating in the breeze.

"That I must have down, at least," said he, in a low voice.

"Then here is wherewithal," said Martin Lightfoot, as he stumbled over something. "The drunken villains have left the ladder in the yard."

Hereward raised the ladder, took down the head, and wrapped it in the cloak; and ere he did so, he kissed the cold forehead. How he had hated that boy! Well, at least he had never wilfully harmed him—or the boy him either, for that matter. And now he had died like a man, killing his foe. He was of the true old blood after all. And Hereward felt that he would have given all that he had, save his wife or his sword-hand, to have that boy alive again, to pet him, and train him, and teach him to fight at his side.

Then he slipped round to one of the narrow unshuttered windows and looked in. The hall was in a wasteful blaze of light; a whole month's candles burning in one night. The table was covered with all his

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father's choicest plate; the wine was running waste upon the floor; the men were lolling at the table in every stage of drunkenness; the loose women, camp-followers and such like, were almost as drunk as their masters; and at the table-head, most drunk of all, sat, in Earl Leofric's seat, the new Lord of Bourne.

Hereward could scarce believe his eyes. He was none other than Gilbert of Ghent's stout Flemish cook, whom he had seen many a time in Scotland. Hereward turned from the window in disgust: but looked again as he heard words which roused his wrath still more.

For in the open space nearest the door stood a glee-man, a dancing, harping, foul-mouthed fellow, who was showing off ape's tricks, jesting against the English short coats—a continual source of insult among the long-robed French—and shuffling about in mockeries of English dancing. At some particularly coarse jest of his, the new Lord of Bourne burst into a roar of admiration.

"Ask what thou wilt, fellow, and thou shalt have it. Thou wilt find me a better master to thee than ever was Morcar, the English barbarian."

The scoundrel, say the old chroniclers, made a request concerning Hereward's family which cannot be printed here.

Hereward ground his teeth. "If thou livest till morning light," said he, "I will not."

The last brutality awoke some better feeling in one of the girls—a large coarse Fleming, who sat by the

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new lord's side. "Fine words," said she, scornfully enough, "for the sweepings of Norman and Flemish kennels. You forget that you left one of this very Leofric's sons behind in Flanders, who would besom you all out if he was here before the morning's dawn."

"Hereward?" cried the cook, striking her down with a drunken blow; "the scoundrel who stole the money which the Frisians sent to Count Baldwin, and gave it to his own troops? We are safe enough from him at all events; he dare not show his face on this side the Alps, for fear of the gallows."

Hereward had heard enough. He slipped down from the window to Martin, and led him round the house.

"Now then, down with the ladder quick, and dash in the door. I go in: stay thou outside. If any man passes me, see that he pass not thee."

Martin chuckled a ghostly laugh as he helped the ladder down. In another moment the door was burst in, and Hereward stood upon the threshold. He gave one war-shout of—A Wake! A Wake! and then rushed forward. As he passed the gleeman, he gave him one stroke across the loins; the wretch fell shrieking.

And then began a murder grim and great. They fought with ale-cups, with knives, with benches: but drunken and unarmed, they were hewn down like sheep. Fifteen Normans, says the chronicler (who gives minute details of the whole scene), were in the

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hall when Hereward burst in. When the sun rose there were fifteen heads upon the gable. Escape had been impossible. Martin had laid the ladder across the door; and the few who escaped the master's terrible sword, stumbled over it, to be brained by the man's not less terrible axe.

Then Hereward took up his brother's head, and went in to his mother.

The women in the bower opened to him. They had seen all that passed from the gallery above, which, as usual, hidden by a curtain, enabled the women to watch unseen what passed in the hall below.

The Lady Godiva sat crouched together, all but alone—for her bower-maidens had fled or been carried off long since—upon a low stool beside a long dark thing covered with a pall. So utterly crushed was she, that she did not even lift up her head as Hereward entered.

He placed his ghastly burden reverently beneath the pall, and then went and knelt before his mother.

For a while neither spoke a word. Then the Lady Godiva suddenly drew back her hood, and dropping on her knees, threw her arms round Hereward's neck, and wept till she could weep no more.

"Blessed strong arms," sobbed she at last, "around me! To feel something left in the world to protect me; something left in the world which loves me."

"You forgive me, mother?"

"You forgive me? It was I, I who was in fault—

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I, who should have cherished you, my strongest, my bravest, my noblest—now my all."

"No, it was all my fault; and on my head is all this misery. If I had been here, as I ought to have been, all this might have never happened."

"You would only have been murdered too. No: thank God you were away; or God would have taken you with the rest. His arm is bared against me, and His face turned away from me. All in vain, in vain! Vain to have washed my hands in innocency, and worshipped him night and day. Vain to have builded minsters to His honour, and heaped the shrines of His saints with gold. Vain to have fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and washed the feet of His poor, that I might atone for my own sins, and the sins of my house. This is His answer. He has taken me up, and dashed me down: and nought is left, but, like Job, to abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes—of, I know not what—I know not what—I know not what—unless it be that poor Algar held some Church lands; I forget where they are, now, though I warned him often of them. My brains are broken, good Saints. I forget—would that I could forget more—and poor Morcar held them till this ruin. Is it that, Hereward? The father takes God's lands; the son will not restore them: a dark crime—who shall atone for that?—though it is but a few acres—a few acres—after all——"

And so she sobbed on, like any child.

"We will make them up, mother, we will make

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them up twice over. But never say that God has deserted you. See, He has sent you me!" said Hereward, wondering to find himself, of all men on earth, preaching consolation.

"Yes, I have you! Hold me. Love me. Let me feel that one thing loves me upon earth. I want love; I must have it: and if God, and His mother, and all the Saints, refuse their love, I must turn to the creature, and ask it to love me, but for a day."

"For ever, mother."

"You will not leave me?"

"If I do, I come back, to finish what I have begun."

"More blood! Oh God! Hereward, not that! Let us return good for evil. Let us take up our crosses. Let us bear our sin. Let us humble ourselves under God's hand, and flee into some convent, and there die praying for our country and our kin."

"Men must watch while women pray. I will take you to a minster—to Peterborough."

"No, not to Peterborough——"

"But my Uncle Brand is abbot there, they tell me, now this four years; and that rogue Herluin prior in his place."

"Brand is dying: dying of a broken heart, like me. The Frenchman has given his abbey to one Thorold, the tyrant of Malmesbury—a Frenchman like himself. No, take me where I shall never see a French face. Take me to Crowland—and him with me—where I shall see nought but English faces, and hear English

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chants, and die a free Englishwoman under St. Guthlac's wings."

"Ah!" said Hereward, bitterly, "St. Guthlac is a right Englishman, and will have some sort of fellow-feeling for us; while St. Peter, of course, is somewhat too fond of Rome and those Italian monks. Well—blood is thicker than water; so I hardly blame the blessed Apostle."

"Do not talk so, Hereward."

"Much the saints have done for us, mother, that we are to be so very respectful to their high mightinesses. I fear that, if this Frenchman goes on with his plan of thrusting his monks into our abbeys, I shall have to do more even for St. Guthlac, than ever he did for me. Do not say more, mother. This night has made Hereward a new man. Now prepare"—and she knew what he meant—"and gather all your treasures; and we will start for Crowland to-morrow afternoon."

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CHAPTER XX.

HOW HEREWARD WAS MADE A KNIGHT AFTER THE FASHION OF THE ENGLISH.

A WILD night was that in Bourne. All the folk, free and unfree, man and woman, were out on the streets, asking the meaning of those terrible shrieks, followed by a more terrible silence.

At last Hereward strode down from the hall, his drawn sword in his hand.

"Silence, good folks, and hearken to me, once and for all. There is not a Frenchman left alive in Bourne. If you be the men I take you for, there shall not be one left alive between Wash and Humber. Silence, again!"—as a fierce cry of rage and joy arose, and men rushed forward to take him by the hand, women to embrace him. "This is no time for compliments, good folks, but for quick wit and quick blows. For the law we fight, if we do fight; and by the law we must work, fight or not. Where is the lawman of the town!"

"I was lawman last night, to see such law done as there is left," said Pery. "But you are lawman now. Do as you will. We will obey you."

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"You shall be our lawman," shouted many voices.

"I? Who am I? Out-of-law, and a wolf's head."

"We will put you back into your law,—we will give you your lands in full husting."

"Never mind a husting on my behalf. Let us have a husting, if we have one, for a better end and a bigger than that. Now, men of Bourne, I have put the coal in the bush. Dare you blow the fire till the forest is a-flame from south to north? I have fought a dozen of Frenchmen. Dare you fight Taillebois and Gilbert of Ghent, with William Duke of Normandy at their back! Or will you take me, here as I stand, and give me up to them as an outlaw and a robber, to feed the crows outside the gates of Lincoln! Do it, if you will. It will be the wiser plan, my friends. Give me up to be judged and hanged; and so purge yourselves of the villanous murder of Gilbert's cook —your late lord and master."

"Lord and master! We are free men!" shouted the holders, or yeomen gentlemen. "We hold our lands from God and the sun."

"You are our lord," shouted the socmen, or tenants. "Who but you? We will follow, if you will lead!"

"Hereward is come home!" cried a feeble voice behind. "Let me come to him. Let me feel him."

And through the crowd, supported by two ladies, tottered the mighty form of Surturbrand the blind Viking.

"Hereward is come," cried he, as he folded his master's son in his arms. "Ahoi! he is wet with

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blood! Ahoi! he smells of blood! Ahoi! the ravens will grow fat now, for Hereward is come home!"

Some would have led the old man away: but he thrust them off fiercely.

"Ahoi! come wolf! Ahoi! come kite! Ahoi! come erne from off the fen! You followed us, and we fed you well, when Swend Fork-beard brought us over the sea. Follow us now, and we will feed you better still, with the mongrel Frenchers who scoff at the tongue of their forefathers, and would rob their nearest kinsman of land and lass. Ahoi! Swend's men! Ahoi! Canute's men! Vikings' sons, Sea cocks' sons, Berserkers' sons all! Split up the war-arrow, and send it round: and the Curse of Odin on every man that will not pass it on! A war-king to-morrow, and Hildur's game next day, that the old Surturbrand may fall like a free holder, axe in hand, and not die like a cow, in the straw which the Frenchman has spared him."

All men were silent, as the old Viking's voice, cracked and feeble when he began, gathered strength from rage, till it rang through the still night air like a trumpet blast.

The silence was broken by a long wild cry from the forest, which made the women start, and catch their children closer to them. It was the howl of a wolf.

"Hark to the witch's horse! Hark to the son of Fenris, how he calls for meat! Are ye your father's sons, ye men of Bourne? They never let the grey beast call in vain."

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Hereward saw his opportunity, and seized it. He well knew that there were those in the crowd, as there must needs be in all crowds, who wished themselves well out of the business; who shrank from the thought of facing the Norman barons, much more the Norman king; who were ready enough, had the tide of feeling begun to ebb, to blame Hereward for rashness, even though they might not have gone so far as to give him up to the Normans; who would have advised some sort of compromise, pacifying half-measure, or other weak plan for escaping present danger by future destruction. But three out of four there were good men and true. The savage chant of the old barbarian might have startled them somewhat, for they were tolerably orthodox Christian folk. But there was sense, as well as spirit, in his savageness; and they growled applause as he ceased. Hereward heard, and cried:

"The Viking is right! So speaks the spirit of our fathers; and we must show ourselves their true sons. Send round the war-arrow, and death to the man who does not pass it on! Better die bravely together than falter and part company, to be hunted down one by one by men who will never forgive us as long as we have an acre of land for them to seize. Pery, son of Surturbrand, you are the lawman, put it to the vote!"

"Send round the war-arrow," shouted Pery himself; and if there was a man or two who shrank from the proposal, they found it prudent to shout as loudly as did the rest.

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Ere the morning light, the war-arrow was split into four splinters, and carried out to the four airts, through all Kesteven. If the splinter were put into the house-father's hand, he must send it on at once to the next freeman's house. If he were away, it was stuck into his house-door, or into his great chair by the fire-side, and woe to him if, on his return, he sent it not on likewise. All through Kesteven went that night the arrow-splinters, and with them the whisper, "The Wake is come again;" till, before mid-day, there were fifty well-armed men in the old camping-field outside the town, and Hereward haranguing them in words of fire.

A chill came over them, nevertheless, when he told them that he must at once return to Flanders.

"But it must be," he said. He had promised his good lord and sovereign, Baldwin of Flanders, and his word of honour he must keep. Two visits he must pay ere he went; and then to sea. But within the year, if he were alive on ground, he would return, and with him ships and men, it might be with Sweyn and all the power of Denmark. Only let them hold their own till the Danes should come, and all would be well. So would they show that they were free Englishmen, able to hold England against Frenchmen and all strangers. And whenever he came back he would set a light to Toft, Manthorpe, and Witham-on-the-hill. They were his own farms, or should have been; and better they should burn than Frenchmen hold them. They could be seen far and wide

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over the Bruneswold and over all the fen; and then all men might know for sure that the Wake was come again.

"And nine-and-forty of them," says the chronicler, "he chose to guard Bourne" (seemingly the lands which had been his nephew Morcar's), till he should come back and take them for himself. His own lands, of Witham, Toft and Manthorpe, Gery his cousin should hold till his return; and they should send what they could off them to Lady Godiva at Crowland.

Then they went down to the water and took barge, and laid the corpse therein; and Godiva and Hereward sat at the dead lad's head; and Winter steered the boat, and Gwenoch took the stroke-oar.

And they rowed away for Crowland, by many a mere and many an ea; through narrow reaches of clear brown glassy water; between the dark-green alders; between the pale-green reeds; where the coot clanked, and the bittern boomed, and the sedge-bird, not content with its own sweet song, mocked the notes of all the birds around; and then out into the broad lagoons, where hung motionless, high over head, hawk beyond hawk, buzzard beyond buzzard, kite beyond kite, as far as eye could see. Into the air, as they rowed on, whirred up great skeins of wild fowl innumerable, with a cry as of all the bells of Crowland, or all the hounds of the Bruneswold; while clear above all their noise sounded the wild whistle of the curlews, and the trumpet note of the

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great white swan. Out of the reeds, like an arrow, shot the peregrine, singled one luckless mallard from the flock, caught him up, struck him stone dead with one blow of his terrible heel, and swept his prey with him into the reeds again.

"Death! death! death!" said Lady Godiva, as the feathers fluttered down into the boat and rested on the dead boy's pall. "War among man and beast; war on earth; war in air; war in the water beneath" as a great pike rolled at his bait, sending a shoal of white fish flying along the surface. "And war, says holy writ, in heaven above. Oh Thou who didst die to destroy death, when will it all be over?"

And thus they glided on from stream to stream, until they came to the sacred isle of "the inheritance of the Lord, the soil of St. Mary and St. Bartholomew; the most holy sanctuary of St. Guthlac and his monks; the minster most free from worldly servitude; the special almshouse of the most illustrious kings; the sole place of refuge for any one in all tribulations: the perpetual abode of the saints; the possession of religious men, especially set apart by the Common Council of the kingdom; by reason of the frequent miracles of the most holy Confessor, an ever fruitful mother of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi; and by reason of the privileges granted by the kings, a city of grace and safety to all who repent."

As they drew near, they passed every minute some fisher's log canoe, in which worked with net or line

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the criminal who had saved his life by fleeing to St. Guthlac, and becoming his man forthwith; the slave who had fled from his master's cruelty; and here and there in those evil days, the master who had fled from the cruelty of Frenchmen, who would have done to him as he had done to others. But there all old grudges were put away. They had sought the peace of St. Guthlac; and therefore they must keep his peace; and get their living from the fish of the five rivers, within the bounds whereof was peace, as of their own quiet streams; for the Abbot and St. Guthlac were the only lords thereof, and neither summoner nor sheriff of the king, nor armed force of knight or earl, could enter there.

At last they came to Crowland minster: a vast range of high-peaked buildings, founded on piles of oak and alder driven into the fen—itself built almost entirely of timber from the Bruneswold; barns, granaries, stables, workshops, stranger's hall, fit for the boundless hospitality of Crowland; infirmary, refectory, dormitory, library, abbot's lodgings, cloisters; with the great minster towering up, a steep pile, half wood, half stone, with narrow round-headed windows, and leaden roofs; and, above all, the great wooden tower, from which, on high days, chimed out the melody of the seven famous bells, which had not their like in English land. Guthlac, Bartholomew, and Bettelm were the names of the biggest, Turketul and Tatwin of the middle, and Pega and Bega of the smallest. So says Ingulph, who saw them a few years

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after pouring down on his own head in streams of melted metal. Outside the minster walls were the cottages of the corrodiers, or folk who, for a corrody, or life pittance from the abbey, had given away their lands;[1] beyond them again the natural park of grass, dotted with mighty oaks and ashes; and beyond all those, cornlands of inexhaustible fertility, broken up by the good Abbot Egelric some hundred years before, from which, in times of dearth, the monks of Crowland fed the people of all the neighbouring fens.

They went into the great courtyard. All men were quiet, yet all men were busy; baking and brewing,

[1] This fashion of Corrody was one which brought much land to monks, and grudging to heirs-at-law. As an instance—Geoffrey de Brachecourt and his wife, a few years after, gave (with consent of Alan de Morton, his nephew and heir, and Gilbert of Ghent, his feudal lord) his township of Brachecurt or Brathwaite to the Cistercian Monks of Vauldey, now Grimsthorpe Park, on the following conditions:—That his wife should have clothing of bluet and lambs' skins; and he of grising or halbergit and lambs' skins; and that their food should be such as the monks had. Their two servants were to fare the same as those of the brotherhood. The opinion of Alan de Morton concerning such a bargain may be guessed, at least by those who are aware that it was made for the purpose of escaping certain years of purgatory; *i.e.* of burning alive in the next world.

When we talk of the piety of our ancestors in giving lands to the Church, we should always remember that this was what their piety too often signified. When we complain of the squires, in Edward the Sixth's time, for taking back the treasures and lands of the monasteries, we should remember that they had been got from those squires' forefathers, on such grounds as these, and no other.

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carpentering and tailoring, in the workshops; reading and writing in the cloister; praying and singing in the church; and teaching the children in the school-house. Only the ancient sempects—some near upon a hundred and fifty years old,—wandered where they would, or basked against a sunny wall, like autumn flies; each with a young monk to guide him, and listen to his tattle of old days. For, said the laws of Turketul the good—"Nothing disagreeable about the affairs of the monastery shall be mentioned in their presence. No person shall presume in any way to offend them: but with the greatest peace and tranquillity they shall await their end."

So while the world outside raged, and fought, and conquered, and plundered, they within the holy isle kept up some sort of order, and justice, and usefulness, and love to God and man. And about the yards, among the feet of the monks, hopped the sacred ravens, descendants of those who brought back the gloves at St. Guthlac's bidding; and overhead, under all the eaves, built the sacred swallows, the descendants of those who sat and sang upon St. Guthlac's shoulders; and when men marvelled thereat, he the holy man replied, "Know that they who live the holy life draw nearer to the birds of the air, even as they do to the angels in heaven."

And Lady Godiva called for old Abbot Ulfketyl, the good and brave; and fell upon his neck, and told him all her tale; and Ulfketyl wept upon her neck, for they were old and faithful friends.

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And they passed into the dark cool church, where, in the crypt under the high altar, lay the thumb of St. Bartholomew, which old Abbot Turketul used to carry about, that he might cross himself with it in times of danger, tempest, and lightning; and some of the hair of St. Mary, Queen of Heaven, in a box of gold; and a bone of St. Leodegar of Aquitaine; and some few remains, too, of the holy bodies of St. Guthlac, and of St. Bettelm, his servant, and St. Tatwin, who steered him to Crowland, and St. Egbert his confessor, and St. Cissa the anchorite, and of the most holy virgin St. Etheldreda, and many more. But little of them remained since Sigtryg and Bagsac's heathen Danes had heaped them pell-mell on the floor, and burned the church over them and the bodies of the slaughtered monks.

The plunder which was taken from Crowland on that evil day lay, and lies still, with the plunder of Peterborough and many a minster more, at the bottom of the Ouse at Huntingdon Bridge. But it had been more than replaced by the piety of the Danish kings and nobles; and above the twelve white bearskins which lay at the twelve altars, blazed, in the light of many a wax candle, gold and jewels inferior only to those of Peterborough and Coventry.

And there in the nave they buried the lad Godwin, with chant and dirge; and when the funeral was done, Hereward went up toward the high altar, and bade Winter and Gwenoch come with him. And there he knelt, and vowed a vow to God and St.

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Guthlac and the Lady Torfrida, his true love, never to leave from slaying while there was a Frenchman left alive on English ground.

And Godiva and Ulfketyl heard his vow, and shuddered: but they dared not stop him, for they too had English hearts.

And Winter and Gwenoch heard it, and repeated it word for word.

Then he kissed his mother, and called Winter and Gwenoch, and went forth. He would be back again, he said, on the third day.

Then those three went to Peterborough, and asked for Abbot Brand. And the monks let them in; for the fame of their deed had passed through the forest, and all the French had fled.

And old Brand lay back in his great arm-chair, his legs all muffled up in furs, for he could get no heat; and by him stood Herluin the prior, and wondered when he would die, and Thorold take his place, and they should drive out the old Gregorian chants from the choir, and have the new Norman chants of Robert of Fécamp, and bring in French-Roman customs in all things, and rule the English boors with a rod of iron.

And old Brand knew all that was in his heart, and looked up like a patient ox beneath the butcher's axe, and said, "Have patience with me, brother Herluin, and I will die as soon as I can, and go where there is neither French nor English, Jew nor Gentile, bond or free, but all are alike in the eyes of Him who made them."

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But when he saw Hereward come in, he cast the mufflers off him, and sprang up from his chair, and was young and strong in a moment, and for a moment.

And he threw his arms round Hereward, and wept upon his neck, as his mother had done. And Hereward wept upon his neck, though he had not wept upon his mother's.

Then Brand held him at arm's length, or thought he held him; for he was leaning on Hereward, and tottering all the while; and extolled him as the champion, the warrior, the stay of his house, the avenger of his kin, the hero of whom he had always prophesied that his kin would need him, and that then he would not fail.

But Hereward answered him modestly and mildly:

"Speak not so to me and of me, Uncle Brand. I am a very foolish, vain, sinful man, who have come through great adventures, I know not how, to great and strange happiness; and now again to great and strange sorrows; and to an adventure greater and stranger than all that has befallen me from my youth up until now. Therefore make me not proud, Uncle Brand, but keep me modest and lowly, as befits all true knights and penitent sinners; for they tell me that God resists the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. And I have that to do which do I cannot, unless God and His saint give me grace from this day forth.

Brand looked at him, astonished; and then turned to Herluin.

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"Did I not tell thee, prior? This is the lad whom you called graceless and a savage; and see, since he has been in foreign lands, and seen the ways of knights, he talks as clerkly as a Frenchman, and as piously as any monk."

"The Lord Hereward," said Herluin, "has doubtless learned much from the manners of our nation which he would not have learned in England. I rejoice to see him returned so Christian and so courtly a knight."

"The Lord Hereward, Prior Herluin, has learnt one thing in his travels—to know somewhat of men and the hearts of men, and to deal with them as they deserve of him. They tell me that one Thorold of Malmesbury,—Thorold of Fécamp, the minstrel, he that made the song of Roland—that he desires this abbey."

"I have so heard, my lord."

"Then I command,—I, Hereward, Lord of Bourne —that this abbey be held against him and all Frenchmen, in the name of Swend Ulfsson, king of England, and of me. And he that admits a Frenchman therein, I will shave his crown for him so well, that he shall never need razor more. This I tell thee; and this I shall tell thy monks before I go. And unless you obey the same, my dream will be fulfilled; and you will see Goldenborough in a light low, and yourselves burning in the midst thereof."

"Swend Ulfsson? Swend of Denmark? What words are these?" cried Brand.

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"You will know within six months, uncle."

"I shall know better things, my boy, before six months are out."

"Uncle, uncle, do not say that."

"Why not? If this mortal life be at best a prison and a grave, what is it worth now to an Englishman?"

"More than ever; for never had an Englishman such a chance of showing English mettle, and winning renown for the English name. Uncle, you must do something for me and my comrades ere we go."

"Well, boy?"

"Make us knights."

"Knights, lad? I thought you had been a belted knight this dozen years?"

"I might have been made a knight by many, after the French fashion, many a year agone. I might have been knight when I slew the white bear. Ladies have prayed me to be knighted again and again since. Something kept me from it. Perhaps" (with a glance at Herluin) "I wanted to show that an English squire could be the rival and the leader of French and Flemish knights."

"And thou hast shown it, brave lad," said Brand, clapping his great hands.

"Perhaps I longed to do some mighty deed at last, which would give me a right to go to the bravest knight in all Christendom, and say, Give me the accolade, then! Thou only art worthy to knight as good a man as thyself."

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"Pride and vainglory," said Brand, shaking his head.

"But now I am of a sounder mind. I see now why I was kept from being knighted—till I had done a deed worthy of a true knight; till I had mightily avenged the wronged, and mightily succoured the oppressed; till I had purged my soul of my enmity against my own kin, and could go out into the world a new man, with my mother's blessing on my head."

"But not of the robbery of St. Peter," said Herluin. The French monk wanted not for moral courage: no French monk did in those days. And he proved it by those words.

"Do not anger the lad, Prior; now, too, above all times, when his heart is softened towards the Lord."

"He has not angered me. The man is right. Here, Lord Abbot and Sir Prior, is a chain of gold, won in the wars. It is worth fifty times the sixteen pence which I stole, and which I repaid double. Let St. Peter take it, for the sins of me and my two comrades, and forgive. And now, Sir Prior, I do to thee what I never did for mortal man. I kneel and ask thy forgiveness. Kneel, Winter! Kneel, Gwenoch!" And Hereward knelt.

Herluin was of double mind. He longed to keep Hereward out of St. Peter's grace. He longed to see Hereward dead at his feet: not because of any personal hatred, but because he foresaw in him a terrible foe to the Norman cause. But he wished, too, to involve Abbot Brand as much as possible in Here-

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ward's rebellions and misdeeds, and above all, in the master-offence of knighting him; for for that end, he saw, Hereward was come. Moreover, he was touched with the sudden frankness and humility of the famous champion. So he answered mildly:

"Verily, thou hast a knightly soul. May God and St. Peter so forgive thee and thy companions as I forgive thee, freely and from my heart."

"Now," cried Hereward; "A boon! A boon! Knight me and these my fellows, Uncle Brand, this day."

Brand was old and weak; and looked at Herluin.

"I know," said Hereward, "that the French look on us English monk-made knights as spurious and adulterine, unworthy of the name of knight. But, I hold—and what churchman will gainsay me?—that it is nobler to receive sword and belt from a man of God, than from a man of blood like one's-self; for the fittest man to consecrate the soldier of an earthly king, is the soldier of Christ the King of kings."[1]

"He speaks well," said Herluin. "Abbot, grant him his boon."

"Who celebrates high mass to-morrow?"

"Wilton the priest, the monk of Ely," said Herluin, aloud. "And a very dangerous and stubborn Englishman," added he to himself.

"Good. Then this night you shall watch in the church. To-morrow, after the Gospel, the thing shall be done as you will."

[1] Almost word for word from the "Life of Hereward."

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That night two messengers, knights of the Abbot, galloped from Peterborough. One rode to Ivo Taillebois at Spalding, to tell them that Hereward was at Peterborough; and that he must try to cut him off upon the Egelric's road, the causeway which one of the many Abbots Egelric had made, some thirty years before, through Deeping Fen to Spalding, at an enormous expense of labour and of timber. The other knight rode south, along the Roman road to London, to tell King William of the rising of Kesteven, and all the evil deeds of Hereward and of Brand.

And old Brand slept quietly in his bed, little thinking on what errands his prior had sent his knights.

Hereward and his comrades watched that night in St. Peter's church. Oppressed with weariness of body, and awe of mind, they heard the monks drone out their chants through the misty gloom; they confessed the sins—and they were many—of their past wild lives. They had to summon up within themselves courage and strength henceforth to live, not for themselves, but for the fatherland which they hoped to save. They prayed to all the heavenly powers of that Pantheon which then stood between man and God, to help them in the coming struggle: but ere the morning dawned, they were nodding, unused to any long strain of mind.

Suddenly Hereward started, and sprang up, with a cry of fire.

"What? Where?" cried his comrades; while the monks ran up.

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"The minster is full of flame. No use, too late, you cannot put it out. It must burn."

"You have been dreaming," said one.

"I have not," said Hereward. "Is it Lammas night?"

"What a question! It is the vigil of the Nativity of St. Peter and St. Paul."

"Thank heaven; I thought my old Lammas night's dream was coming true at last."

Herluin heard, and knew what he meant.

After which Hereward was silent, filled with many thoughts.

The next morning, before the high mass, those three brave men walked up to the altar; laid thereon their belts and swords; and then knelt humbly at the foot of the steps till the Gospel was finished.

Then came down from the altar Wilton of Ely, and laid on each man's bare neck the bare blade, and bade him take back his sword in the name of God and of St. Peter and St. Paul, and use it like a true knight, for a terror and punishment to evil doers, and a defence for women and orphans, and the poor and the oppressed, and the monks the servants of God.

And then the monks girded each man with his belt and sword once more. And after mass was sung, they rose, each feeling himself—and surely not in vain—a better man.

At least this is certain, that Hereward would say to his dying day, how he had often proved that none would fight so well as those who had received their

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sword from God's knights the monks. Therefore he would have, in after years, almost all his companions knighted by the monks; and he brought into Ely with him that same good custom which he had learnt at Peterborough, and kept it up as long as he held the isle.

Then he said—

"Have your monks a limner here, who can paint for me?"

"That can I," said Wilton of Ely.

"Then take my shield, and raze from it this bear which I carry."

Wilton brought pencil and paint, and did so.

"Now, paint me in a W, that shall stand for Wake; and make it—make it out of the knots of a monk's girdle, for a sign that I am a monk's knight, and not a king's; and that I am the champion of the monks of England against the monks of France, from this time forth for evermore."

Wilton did it; and made out of two monks' girdles none other than the after-famous Wake knot.

"Now do the same by Winter and Gwenoch's shields. Monks' knights are we; and monks' battles we will fight."

"You must have a motto to match withal, my good Lord," said Wilton, throwing his English heart into the work.

"What better than my own name—Wake? These are times in which good Englishmen must not sleep—and sleep I will not, trust me; nor mine neither."

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"Vigila, that will be in Latin."

"Ay—let us have Latin; and show these Frenchmen that we are clerks and gentlemen, as well as they."

"Vigila . . . et Ora," said the monk solemnly. "Watch and pray; lest thou enter into temptation."

"Watch—and pray. Thou speakest like a man of God," said Hereward, half sadly. "Thou hast said: so be it. God knows, I have need of that too, if only I knew how. But I will watch, and my wife shall pray; and so will the work be well parted between us."

And so was born the Wake motto, and the Wake knot.

It was late when they got back to Crowland. The good Abbot received them with a troubled face.

"As I feared, my Lord, you have been too hot and hasty. The French have raised the country against you."

"I have raised it against them, my Lord."

"But we have news that Sir Frederick——"

"And who may he be?"

"A very terrible Goliath of these French; old and crafty; a brother of old Earl Warrenne of Norfolk, whom God confound. And he has sworn to have your life, and has gathered knights and men-at-arms at Lynn in Norfolk."

"Very good; I will visit him as I go home, Lord Abbot. Not a word of this to any soul."

"I tremble for thee, thou young David."

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"One cannot live for ever, my Lord. Farewell."

A week after a boatman brought news to Crowland how Sir Frederick was sitting in his inn at Lynn, when there came in one with a sword, and said, "I am Hereward the Wake. I was told that thou didst desire greatly to see me; therefore I am come, being a courteous knight," and therewith smote off his head. And when the knights and others would have stopped him, he cut his way through them, killing some three or four at each stroke, himself unhurt; for he was clothed from head to foot in magic armour, and whosoever smote it, their swords melted in their hands. And so gaining the door, he vanished in a great cloud of sea-fowl, that cried for ever "The Wake is come again."

And after that the fen-men said to each other, that all the birds upon the meres cried nothing save "The Wake is come again."

And so, already surrounded with myth and mystery, Hereward flashed into the fens and out again, like the lightning brand, destroying as he passed. And the hearts of all the French were turned to water; and the land had peace from its tyrants for many days.

END OF VOL. I.

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